

volume 53
issue 5
summer
2014

BROKEN

By TA

My spirit rips, you can't see,
It robs your vision of all beauty.
The heart breaks, you can't speak,
mumbled, your tears come quick.
's, you can't understand,
what went wrong.

vessel,
ass.
you

Dear PEAK,

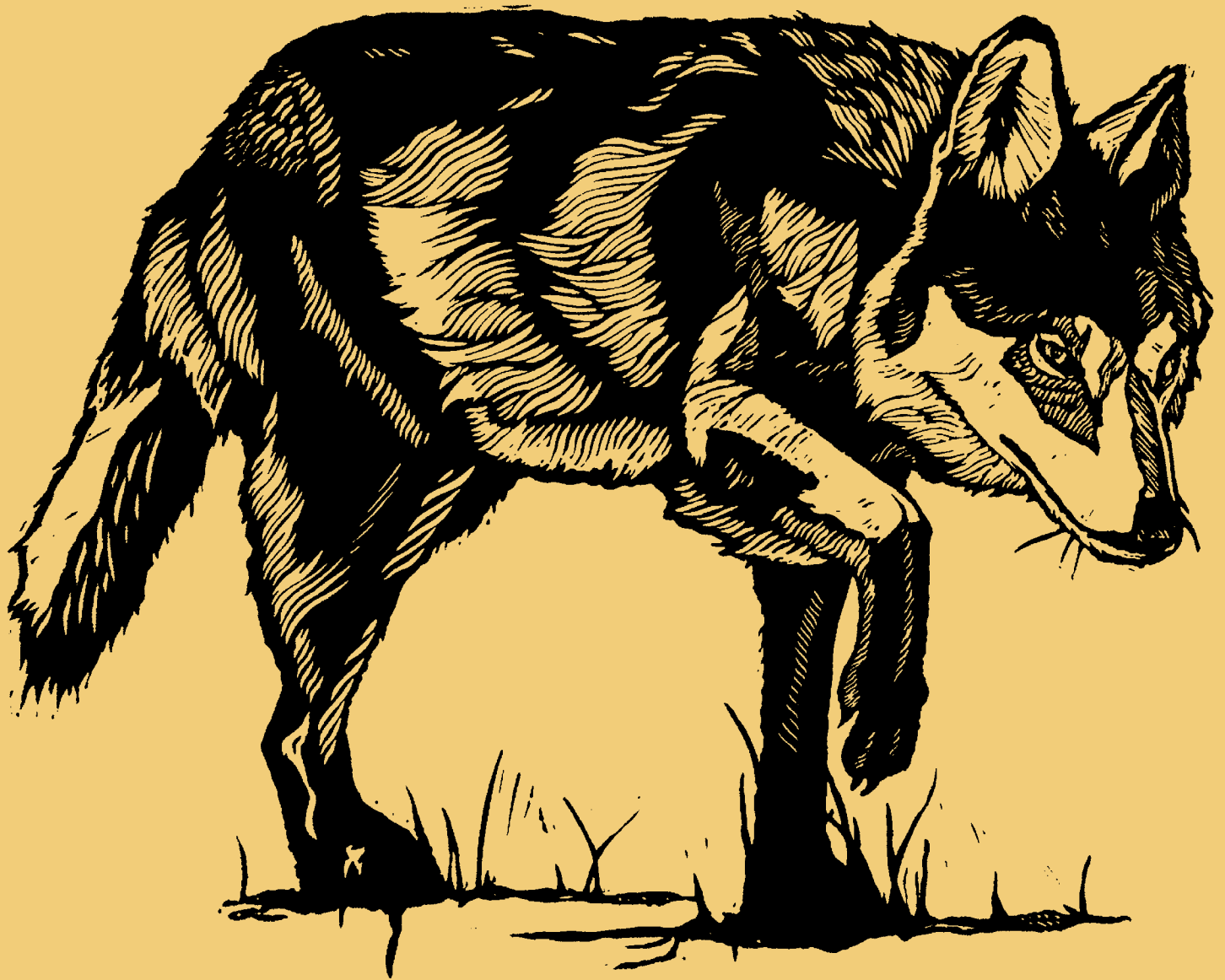
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The Peak

Volume 53
Issue 5
Summer 2014

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The opinions and views expressed
within these pages do not
necessarily reflect the views or
opinions of the peak collective.

The countless hours it took to
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everyone who contributed.

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Warrior Publications

Cover

'Prison Letters' by e.war

Inside Cover

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Introducing... *Dispatches From Prison*

WELCOME TO THE SUMMER ISSUE OF *THE PEAK*, DISPATCHES from Prison. Two summers ago *The Peak Collective* released an issue entitled *Dispatches from Ontario Prisons* containing various articles and artwork by incarcerated individuals in Ontario. Again, we aim to share the writings of incarcerated folks with those kept inside and out of prison walls.

Prisons function is to isolate people, rendering silent the voices of those in prisons. If not silencing them, muffling or distorting them through the crackling of the broken telephone wires connecting us through thick panes of glass, where we cannot touch our friends and loved ones inside, but only mime the motions of our emotions. With this in mind we hope this issue is successful in its goals of breaking that isolation and amplifying the voices of people facing incarceration either currently or formerly.

We hope to contribute a small piece to the inspiring and strong resistance to prisons happening day in and day out inside prisons everywhere. Included in these pages is an interview with Robert Gaucher (page 8), former prisoner and prison abolitionist describing abolition work in the 60s and today; poems and writings from prisoners in a dozen institutions; a report back and summary of the campaign to end immigration detention (page 30); a report back from the prison abolitionist conference in Ottawa (page 23); and various news from current resistance struggles.

We at *The Peak* are privileged enough to put out a magazine which reaches broadly across Turtle Island. It connects vast networks and amplifies the struggles and campaigns folks are taking on. We hope the dissemination of these stories can be seen as an act of solidarity as we use this magazine to project the thoughts, words and actions of those whose voices are rendered silent by the state and its coercive and violent “corrections system”.

With respect to those who came before us,
The Peak Collective





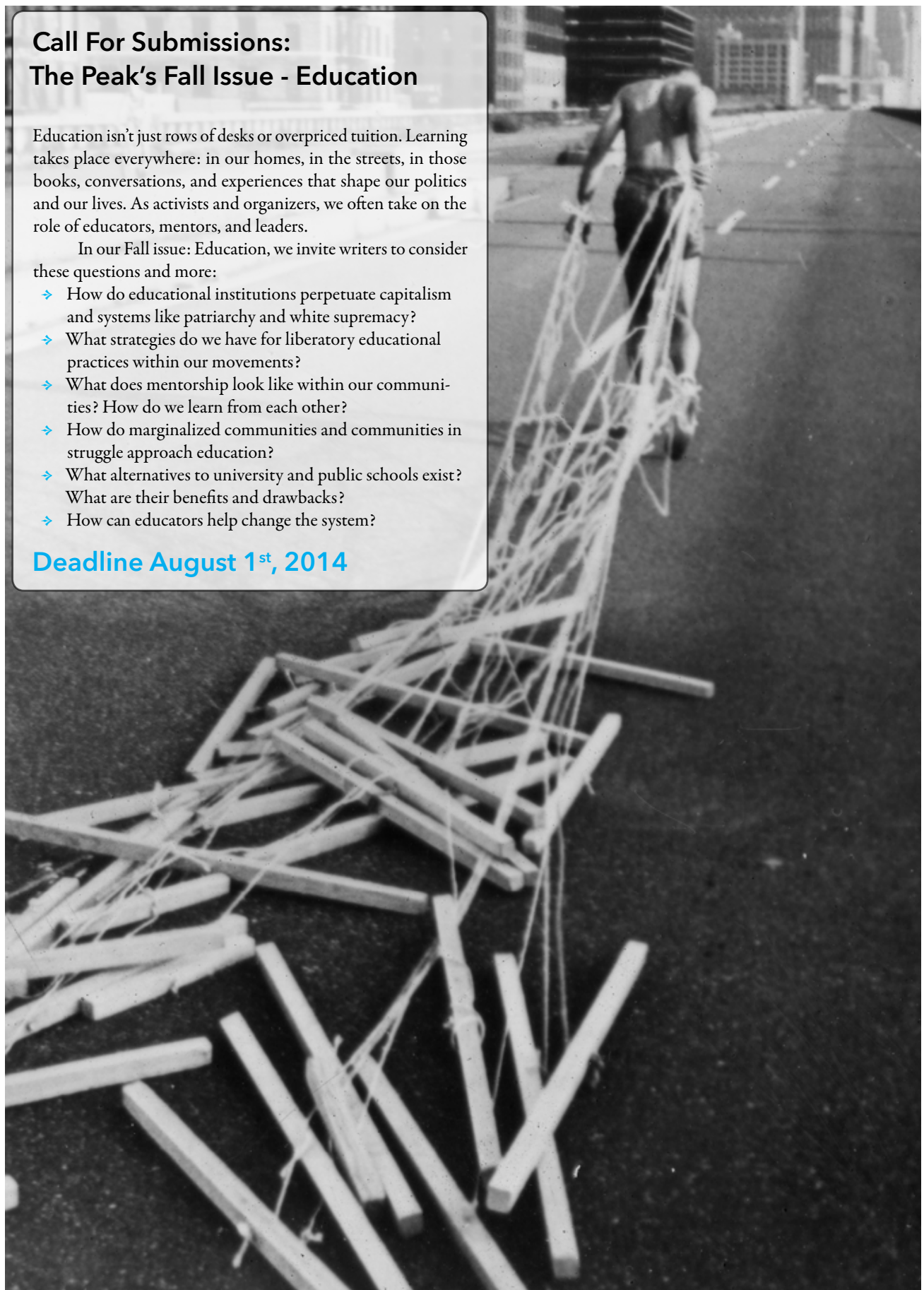
Call For Submissions: The Peak's Fall Issue - Education

Education isn't just rows of desks or overpriced tuition. Learning takes place everywhere: in our homes, in the streets, in those books, conversations, and experiences that shape our politics and our lives. As activists and organizers, we often take on the role of educators, mentors, and leaders.

In our Fall issue: Education, we invite writers to consider these questions and more:

- How do educational institutions perpetuate capitalism and systems like patriarchy and white supremacy?
- What strategies do we have for liberatory educational practices within our movements?
- What does mentorship look like within our communities? How do we learn from each other?
- How do marginalized communities and communities in struggle approach education?
- What alternatives to university and public schools exist? What are their benefits and drawbacks?
- How can educators help change the system?

Deadline August 1st, 2014



The Prison

by Nyki Kish

At edges of towns, and hidden well
Stand blocks of cages, razor-wire wrapped
Where human put humans, at the peril of morality
In the name of humanity, we inflict harsh sorrow.

Confined within concrete, strong locks and steel
Many a soul is are kept, withered and anguished
Not a warm meal to nourish, nor a soft hand to feel
Not a name to be called by, not a moment to heal.

And for years, where years are eternities long
Where each day's pain exceeds the last
Where cruelty is a currency,
Life sentences, solitary...
In the suffering of humans, there are few greater pains
Then lengthy isolation games.

At the tip of the state's tongue, but never aired
Is why the prison truly stands
While affluence consumes, forgetting just down lane,
Small cells cage and ruin and torture and shame.

At the edges of towns, and hidden well
Where prisons stand all hope has fell:
The most abhorrent institution that could manifest
Thrives on hatred and violence, domination and death.

The world
was born
yearning to be
a home
for everyone

-Eduardo Galeano

A Personal Story of Immigration Detention

by Anonymous

I CAME TO CANADA ON MARCH 29th, 1995 AS A LANDED immigrant sponsored by my mother. I was 20 years old then. I've met my wife here in Canada. We were married on July 24th, 1999, and we've been blessed with two beautiful daughters.

My oldest daughter was born on August 23rd, 2000. She's 13 years old. My youngest was born on June 16th, 2004. She's 9 years old. Both of my kids were born here in Canada, and both are citizens of this country. I have been married to my lovely wife for fourteen years. I've been legally employed during my stay here, but unfortunately have been in trouble with the law in the past, and I've already paid for it. The longest time I've spent in jail is six months for fraud under one thousand dollars. I was laid off from a job in 2009 and collected Employment Insurance and welfare [Ontario Works].

On March 11th, 2014, I finally landed a job doing renovations. My boss was so happy with me because I'm good with tools and a smart and hard worker. It had been a while since I had a job, so that's why I wanted to impress my boss and totally forgot my court date on March 14th. That morning I was at work in London, Ontario. As soon as I got to the job site I realized that I was supposed to be at court at 9:00am. My boss drove me to downtown Toronto to attend court and unfortunately I only got to the courthouse at 1pm. I spoke to the lady at the front desk and she said the court was closed. I was given advice to write a letter to the IRB (Immigration and Refugee Board) to reopen my case, explaining why I was late, which I did, but never got to send it. I took a day off work on my birthday (March 28th) to report to my probation officer and I had the letter for the IRB with me that day to mail it, but as soon as I was finished with the probation officer I was arrested by a CBSA (Canada Border Service Agency) officer and have been awaiting deportation ever since. After twenty years the government wants to deport me and send me back to the Philippines, and also strip away my landed immigrant documents and papers.

The sad part is I didn't even have my birthday dinners with my family. They were all left wondering where I was and also worried that something bad happened to me that day.

If I were to get deported to the Philippines I would not know where and how to start again. Especially with the tragedy that just happened last year, when a typhoon wiped out a lot of cities and killed thousands of people. I have no one back in the Philippines, all my connections are here. Most of all I have my family here in Canada and my biggest concern is for my family. This all breaks my family's heart, especially my kids. If I was to be taken away from them I don't know how they will survive, even if the government thinks that is what is best for the kids. My wife hardly understands English, she is having trouble helping the kids with their school work, and also with their doctor's appointments. I love them so much and don't want to get separated from them. I don't want kids to grow up without the supervision of a father on their side. Unfortunately, I've been through it. I myself grew up without a mother and father on my side. I was raised by my mom's aunt for twenty years and only just met my mom in 1995 when I landed here in Canada. I still don't know who my father was. I've tried to ask my mom who my father was and where he from, but never got an answer. I just can't bear to see or to know that my kids would go through the same as me. I would rather die than have them taken away from me, but I'm not giving up on them and hope that one day new doors will be open for me to walk through.

Sometimes my present situation wears on me so much so that I cry every night in my bed until I fall asleep. Just from writing my story my heart swells up and my eyes flood with tears. I pray to the lord and patiently wait for the lord to hear my prayers and pull me out of this lonely pit full of depression and agony. And I hope for that day that I'll get to go home to my family again. △



Forty Years of Prison Abolition:

An Interview with Robert Gaucher

Robert Gaucher is a long-time penal abolitionist, and organizer with Penal Press¹. He was interviewed at the International Conference of Prison Abolition (ICOPA) by Mina Ramos.

Mina: Hi, Robert. Could you introduce yourself and give us a bit of background on who you are?

Robert: We're here at the International Conference on Penal Abolition, the 15th international conference. I've been involved with [the conference] from the beginning, the first one being in Toronto in 1983. We've been across the world, this is the fourth [ICOPA] in Canada. I have been involved in prison rights and struggles since the 1960's. I was a prisoner when I was a teenager, into my early 20s, so that certainly puts you on the road to a critical perspective and understanding of the world. I went from a penitentiary to Queen's University to do an undergraduate degree, and I was taken over, I found it really interesting. I was involved in the anti-Vietnam war movement, but I had never encountered theorized arguments that actually included

what I had to say. I came to realize that there were a whole lot of people who had been arguing positions that I shared. It really changed my mind.

I found the world of ideas, critical ideas to be everything I wanted, so I pursued that. I ended up being a university professor because I couldn't figure out what else to do. I never did degrees for a job, I did them because I wanted to learn. I was involved in various actions all through the 60s and 70s so for me, studying was a way to better understand the things I was doing. When I finished my masters in 1974 I got a job with Statistics Canada. They gave me a homicide study to do and it became the study given to the federal government in the debate on capital punishment. So I got really involved in the capital punishment debate at the time. I had done time and had met people who were in for homicide and there was no question in my mind that capital punishment was wrong. I got a book called *The Politics of Abolition* by Thomas Mathiesen because I was involved myself in this debate on capital punishment and I realized that I didn't really understand it well enough. So Thomas's book was wonderful, it

¹ www.penalpress.com

gave me a step up and helped me to understand what I was engaging in. So after my parole was up I was able to get accepted at the University of Sheffield, in the Faculty of Law with Ian Taylor. He had been one of the people who started a socio-legal degree. It's a mix of sociology and legal studies. Ian and others published an article in 1973, entitled "The New Criminologies; Towards the Social Theory of Deviance" which critiques everything that had been done in criminology, what we now refer to as administrative criminology. That is, criminology by the people who work in the system, not the people who exist outside of it. So when I met Ian, there was all this stuff going on and I got really embroiled in it. For myself, it was the first time I had encountered real working-class politics. Sheffield was a working-class city. People were really proud to be working class.

Mina: *When did Penal Press first start and how were you involved?*

Robert: I first encountered Penal Press in 1963 when I was sent to the penitentiary at age seventeen. And I had found these back issues that someone had given me to read called the *Kingston Penitentiary Telescope*, and it was a Penal Press magazine, written by prisoners, produced by prisoners and they had outside subscribers. I thought this was pretty amazing. It led me twenty or thirty years later to collect [copies of] Penal Press.

The first Penal Press magazine in Canada was the *Kingston Pen Telescope* which started in September 1951. In rapid order thereafter, *The Beacon* at Dorchester Penitentiary in New Brunswick, *Transition* at British Columbia Penitentiary in Vancouver. Right across the system, they all produced these Penal Press magazines.

They were comprised of commentary, poetry, analysis, announcements about what was going on in the joints, a whole series of things but they were taken very seriously by the people in the editorial group. It had started in the US, there was an international Penal Press that had started in the 1930s in the US with some really famous prison writers, like Tom Runyon and Earl Stanley Gardner. In the 1950s, Canada allowed the production of Penal Press magazines. You have to understand, up until 1947, our penitentiaries ran on a silence system. Prisoners weren't allowed to talk to each other, weren't allowed to talk to guards even, without permission. They were mostly in their cells, they were let out to the yard for maybe half an hour a day, walking in a silence. There was limited work. The Archambault Report², which came out in 1938, was a royal commission that really pushed the state to make prisons reformative, not just dungeons. So

there was this penal reform movement that really starts to grow in the 1940s, they open it up, they disband the silence system so prisoners are able to talk. They put in recreation, they put in baseball, for example, in some of the pens. The Penal Press for the man, the state, was a way of selling penal reform, they said they had put printshops in, teaching people to start printing. The magazine was written by prisoners, edited by prisoners. The state hoped that they would be able to sell penal reform to the general public. But it was also directed at prisoners themselves. They allowed these magazines to go from prison to prison, so the editors of these magazines would get each others magazines. I thought one of the interesting things that developed was this international Penal Press network, where you have articles that are being distributed and republished in other Penal Press magazines across the country. Because of this network you start to get a sense of what are the issues facing prisoners, this network would act as a chorus of common issues amongst prisoners.

With our archives of Penal Press in every penitentiary, we can look back and see in this year, here are the common themes being written about from coast to coast.

After all the prison riots in the 1970s, they really started to clamp down and censor the Penal Press. Some magazines persisted for a while, but they really got closed out. They became more and more censored. So in 1987 at an IPOCA conference in Montreal, we were talking about the absence of prisoners in the conference, the absence of prisoners in the movement. You can't get prisoners out of jail to go to a prison abolition conference. We were trying to figure out, how best to do this. So myself and another person (Howard Davidson) were working with the Lifer's Group at Collins Bay pen and I got them to write a paper on penal abolition. So we sat back and thought, we'd seen how the Penal Press was used to establish Prison Justice Day across the country, the Penal Press was a really important component in that development. One of the things we thought was hilarious was that Prison Justice Day was started out of Millhaven Penitentiary, and the Odyssey group there, they're all long termers. What the state did was divide them all, shipped them out to different penitentiaries. So all of the sudden there are Prison Justice Day actions happening in penitentiaries all over the place. There was also a lot of work done on the outside too, so pretty soon we were observing August 10th on the outside too.

Howard, Liz and I and others had seen how the Penal Press was used in Prison Justice Day and we decided to make a magazine, *The Journal of Prisoners on Prisons (JPP)*, a journal that would be devoted to prison writing. We published [work by] prisoners, former prisoners and their families;

 **Royal Commission**
Report on Penal
Reform in Canada"

sometimes we have academics writing responses at the end of the issue. We're in our 25th year. We turned it into an academic journal, it's peer reviewed like other university journals. If you were a student you could use it in a paper.

Although the prison industrial complex has expanded, in many ways it is still the same state bureaucracy, the same political control that it's always been. But there are more prisoners. One of the things that came out of ICOPA was that in the 60s and 70s we were all pretty active. I was a teenager when I first got involved. Our elders were not that much older, and had been doing politics for a while. I think that's changed. I don't think the atmosphere in society is the same. I don't think that... there was this kind of urge. Like, if you look back, Pierre Trudeau had long hair, there were these indications that there was something [radical] there. And that's gone. So I think you all have to do something totally different, in terms of the population and the way people think. One of the things the bastards did, they did all this television stuff. And now TV is dominated by police shows, like the bad guys are all stereotypically evil and the cops are good. I had a student do a study [of cop shows] back in the 90s, and they had two murders per episode, which is totally abnormal. So I think your society's been imbued with that, where, oh, everybody's a sex offender and kids can't wander off on their own.

Mina: *That's how new laws are getting passed, like the Safer Communities and Neighborhoods Act, Bill C-10, that introduced mandatory minimum [sentences], that's how they passed that. It was through [this rhetoric of] "we need to save kids from sex offenders."*

Robert: Right. And in the 80s, they put in Crimestoppers... it was this wave of repression that kind of enveloped everything. So, you've got that legacy. You know, the thing about us in the '60s, the legacy was really the second world war, when people were against fascism. You see, the best criminology came out of Scandinavia. It's cause they were all arrested and locked up by the Nazis, right? So they were like, "No. Fuck prisons." And I think my generation still had some of that [sentiment] about it, you know, "we shouldn't punish people, we should rehabilitate them." That [sentiment] is gone. So I think you guys have got a harder row to hoe in lots of ways.

You know, in Canada, there are some folks, my elders, like Claire Culhane. You should really read through her work. They were activists. They really did it. The RCMP had a file on Claire, and they referred to her as a one-woman army. And

she was! Once she chained herself to the front of the door of Parliament, and it took them quite a while to unlock her. If she wanted to talk to the Commission of Penitentiaries, she'd be there when the doors opened at 7:30 in the morning and she'd sit in his office, and if he wouldn't see her, she'd be back the next day, and the day after that. She was into civil disobedience, but she was just an organizer. And prisoners loved her. She was Saint Claire to all of us.

She wrote a couple books, *Barred From Prison*, and *Still Barred From Prison: Social Injustice in Canada*. There's a nice biography of her by Mick Lowe, *One-Woman Army: The Life of Claire Culhane*.

Liz Elliot did some really interesting work around restorative justice. The model of restorative justice, as I understand it, is not this compromised, reformed thing that's [been coopted]. It really has [Indigenous] roots, and it's really about bringing people back into the community and not pushing them out, which is what [prison does].

Mina: *In the community of people who are doing prison abolition now, in the younger community, they're calling it "transformative justice." I'm sure it'll have another name once that gets co-opted, but that's where it's at right now.*

Robert: And that [idea] comes out of ICOPA, that's Ruth Morris³, one of the founders of ICOPA. If you read her book, *Stories of Transformative Justice*, you get a sense of her development over time. She started out doing mediation, reconciliation, and restorative justice—she was a Quaker, you know, a peacenik in that way. Over time, with her involvements, she started to realize that that's just piecemeal stuff. Any reform you make, [the system] just absorbs it and it's gone. They use it in bullshit ways, to say "well, we're doing that. We understand restorative justice."

Anyway, Art Solomon's⁴ books, Ethan Guttman's books, there's some really good work out there that I think everybody in our society should read, especially young activists. △

3 Ruth Morris was a penal abolitionist who fought for racial equality and healing justice. She is the author of four books, including *Stories of Transformative Justice* (Canadian Scholars' Press Inc. 2000).

4 Dr. Art Solomon (Kesheyanakwan) was an Anishnabe (Ojibwe) elder and spiritual leader from Sudbury, Ontario. He is the author of several books, including *Eating Bitterness: A Vision Beyond The Prison Walls*.

Comprehend a Poetics Picture

by Colton Ferguson, aka Lion Spirit

“Power is in the people, change is up to us, so treat one like you would treat yourself then we will all be equal. Never give up the fight of finding peace with yourself, that goal is reachable.”

These words describing a description, like a portrait for you to view from my position, and get the proper perception.

As I portray a photo-realism connection, see an image of prisons, corrupt corrections.

Relating to these struggles we’re surviving courtesy of the opposition.

As I distinguish from the judgmental critics’ manipulation, manifest this picture of inmates growing cold hearted with the support of an institution.

Some hardened since they went in, with the “help” of a government fruition.

Dig to the root of the problem instead of creating artificial solutions, young men like raisins metaphorically juiceless, ironically from lifeless environments realize the situation, while heartless politics perjure about a better future understand my frustration, that inspired this preoccupied poetic justice for one’s state of mind’s satisfaction, intuition, ambitious prisoners advocate no obligation.

Power is in the people; let’s unite, solidarity as a nation.

Only god can judge me, three man made plastic authority, feel this motivation, so remember to keep your head up the sun does come up no matter the occurrence you’re facing.

Hope never gives up it’s a vicious cycle but we can’t stop like we’re the world’s rotation, through my eyes I look at reality with a clear visualization.

Can you see the picture?

Bring Me Back to Life

by Terri M

****Content warning: suicide**

When shadows cast upon us and we hate ourselves so much, but the love for one another carries depth not even God could touch.

I’m the silent gurl who screams and you the man who cries no tears, both full of so much rage but both who dare not share their fear.

Alone for far too long we’ve been, so let’s be alone together, shed our deepest secrets share hearts, love two souls combined forever.

Never be apart even in the darkest times, untie the noose from your neck even when the body hanging is mine.

Died so many times and yet you bring me back to life, give yourself no credit and submit yourself to strife.

Enough’s enough, babe, it’s time for us to live and in these broken hands, it’s to you my heart I give.



Journal Entries From Inside

Jeanette Tossounian spent most of her time in maximum security and some time in solitary confinement for refusing to wear a bra. For more info visit www.anklebonebooks.com

by Jeanette Tossounian

NOVEMBER 3RD, 2012

I'M IN SEGREGATION. BEEN HERE SINCE THURSDAY MORNING, November 1st. They asked me to work laundry again and I had just started when a white-shirt (the one I asked about strip searches,; she was short, stout, short brown hair, thick glasses) came in and called me out into the hall. She told me to put on a bra. I refused. She locked me in seg.¹ I'm here on administration hold until I put on a bra. They are trying to shame me, weaken me, wanting to take power and control over my breasts. It's like rape. I will not give in. I've been incarcerated for eight and a half months and never worn a bra. Why would one authority figure all of a sudden decide to punish me for having breasts? Power and control. Power and control. I will not give them power and control over my body parts. I will not give in. I'm sick of hearing them sexually degrade me by saying how they don't want to see my flabby tits flopping around – the same people who strip search me and tell me to bend over and touch my toes as they look at my crotch. The same people who watch me take out my tampon when I'm completely naked and watch me insert another one. If they don't want to see breasts, then they shouldn't be working at a women's jail. It's just an excuse anyway. It has nothing to do with my "disgusting breasts" (they say as they try to humiliate me), it's about power and control, humiliating me and breaking my body down into sexual parts, dehumanizing me – just like a rapist.

I won't let them break my spirit. I must remain strong.

NOVEMBER 29TH, 2012

I called the Client Conflict guy. What an asshole! He said he looked into the matter, and the rules of the jail for having to wear a bra are in place because if an

I'm here on administration hold
until I put on a bra

inmate doesn't wear a bra, her nipples might show and guards might look and that would cause trouble. This guy, whose job it is to be behind the inmates if their human rights are being violated, said he agreed with these rules. I asked him if we should all be wearing jail-issue burkas then, because my female body is just a sex object and must not be seen. He ignored my comments. I argued with him for twenty minutes until the recorded phone message said my time was up. The more I argued with him, the more he made sexually degrading remarks in his defence on the subject. He said I didn't understand the reasoning. I told him I understand his sexually demeaning comments very well. I gave him the order to look further into the issue and told him where to look and who to contact so he can prove that this is a violation of my human rights. I told him I will call back next week and he better have looked into it by then.

1 Segregation

FEBRUARY 11TH, 2013

This is absolutely insane! I'm in segregation again this time for medical reasons. For the last few weeks I've been asking for more Betnovate cream for my rash. They have been refusing to give me more, saying I used up what I had too quickly, so tough luck. I've always received some every week or two, but now they tell me it should last me a month. So without the cream, my rash spread all over my body and I've been itching like crazy. I would wake up with my pajama pants around my ankles and little spots of blood from scratching all the blistered spots. My thighs are completely covered in the rash, my armpits, stomach, breasts as well. I was putting in a medical request every two to three days, making these complaints, describing my agony and begging for more cream to no avail. Finally, I got to see the doctor this morning. There are two doctors in the jail. The woman doctor and the man doctor. It was the woman who saw me months ago and declared I have allergies and that is why I have a rash and I've been treated for that. Today, the male doctor told me I have scabies and I was immediately segregated and now I'm waiting for scabies treatment. So what is it? Allergies or scabies? It's the same rash as always, can't be both. Maybe it's neither.

So the nurse comes by with some Betnovate cream for me. Um, too late! Where was the cream two weeks ago? I wouldn't be in seg if I had it when I asked for it. I laughed when she gave it to me after explaining not to use it until I get treated for scabies. She told me it was no joking matter. I didn't bother to explain to her that the whole diagnosis and treatment procedure was a big joke.

Only certain
staff care and
they obviously
have personal
issues with
braless women
– control issues.

I'll probably get picked on when I return to the range for the scabies.

I was just told by the guard that instead of packing up my cell and bringing my stuff to seg, they double locked my cell on the range since I'm returning tomorrow, but they will get a worker to

wear gloves and get rid of my sheets and clothing. I requested Pooky (the escort) to clean my cell as I trust her and I know at least one of the other workers is a thief. Pooky has been buying me canteen items lately, so I know she won't steal what she bought me. I joke around and call her my "sugar mommy" Well, she does call me 'Hot Stuff.' She has a great sense of humour.


If I've had scabies this whole time, wouldn't everyone I've been in contact with have them as well? All my cellmates. Everyone at my table. Pretty much at least half the friggin' range!

I have nothing in this cell except this journal my social worker gave me this morning, this pencil and a letter from my mother that says it's all my fault for being a failure.

Mr. T allowed me to go get a book from the shelf to read after I rejected the children's book his partner offered me. Ha ha. When he went to put me back in my cell, he asked me what was happening with the braless situation and why they haven't moved me back to medium yet. I gave him a brief and he told me most of the staff don't care whether I wear a bra or not. I told him I know. It's true. Only certain staff care and they obviously have personal issues with braless women – control issues.

I told the guards how one doctor said one thing about my rash and the other doctor something else. They told me it's probably eczema and not scabies because the female doctor is a skin specialist. But it couldn't hurt to treat me for scabies anyway, they said.

I'm reading a quote by Teddy Roosevelt: "Far better is it to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs, even though checkered by failure... than to rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy nor suffer much, because they live in a grey twilight that knows not victory nor defeat."

By the way, this time I'm in seg cell #9. It was freshly washed down by the worker and still wet when I came in. Mr. T said it's their class five-star accommodations. Ha ha! 

Jeannette Tossounian is a life-long visual artist/writer/activist who recently spent two years locked up in Vanier Centre for Women in Milton, Ontario. She had spent most of her time in maximum security and some bits in solitary confinement for refusing to wear a bra. The jail policy forcing female inmates to wear a bra is no longer in effect. While incarcerated, she wrote nine manuscripts and has just self-published her first book – a collection of poetry and sketches of and about her jail cell. Here are some excerpts from her journal. Visit Jeannette's publishing site at www.anklebonebooks.com.

Dealing With Conflict

by Joel Biter

Joel Bitar is an American extraditee serving time in Ontario, Canada for his participation in the 2010 G20 protests. On February 13th, 2014 Joel pled guilty to twelve counts of mischief over five thousand dollars and was sentenced to twenty months. Check out this blog post and more at www.lockedupyetliberated.noblogs.org

JUNE 18TH, 2014

Before I begin this post, I want to mention that although it's wonderful getting letters in here, it's not so wonderful for some people who see me getting them. Most of my fellow prisoners get no mail at all. When they observe me receiving so much mail, it reminds them of how alone they are in here. Some folks supporting me have sporadically offered to be pen-pals to some of my fellow prisoners so I want to use this blog post to formally ask you all who are reading this to write a friend of mine in here.

His name is Michael. He's a 40 year old Jamaican guy who has a wonderfully positive personality. He could pass for a Buddhist, so impressive is his ability to make light of a terrible situation. Please send him a short letter just to let him know that he's not alone. It will make his day. He told me he's really interested in getting a letter from a woman. Like all heterosexual males locked up, he definitely craves female attention. His address is:

Michael Grant
1501 Fuller Ave
Penetanguishene, ON
L9M 2H4 Canada

Back to the topic at hand. Conflict in life is inevitable when you have various competing interests. Conflict in jail is a scientific certainty because all the people with competing interests are trapped together. Walking away isn't an option because there is nowhere to go. If someone calls you a "bitch" on the street, you can literally turn and walk in the opposite direction. That

Knowing that
you can defend
yourself will prove
invaluable.

privilege doesn't exist here. There's no walking away. Every conflict needs to be resolved and this is usually a torturous and stressful process.

Because of who I am – someone who is geeky-looking, educated, and generally different – I have become the target of certain individuals. I attract unwanted attention. So, in response, I am changing. I talk to people as minimally as possible and avoid letting them see the real me. I keep them guessing.

One verifiable truth about jail: people generally confuse kindness for weakness. One of my theories is that some people have never been shown kindness so they immediately assume that there must be something wrong with a kind person. People here will abuse your kindness. If you give them something — an item like

a newspaper — they will begin to expect and even demand more of the same in the future. Then, if you decide to cut them off, they will immediately resent you and a conflict is born.

So, I've decided to learn how to fight. It's imperative that I have some idea of how to defend myself against the chaotic and hard to predict violence of jail. Better to be prepared than not. Through some clever jail engineering, I've managed to hang a rolled-up mattress off the top bunk in my cell. Every other day I set it up, wrap my wrists and hands, and go at it. I never punched with my left hand before – I'm developing a quick jab. It's great exercise and after 20 minutes, I'm shirtless in my cell sweating profusely.

For anyone about to go to jail: take MMA, boxing, or some type of martial arts training. Don't sit around for months stewing in self-pity like I did. Knowing that you can defend yourself will prove invaluable. It will give you confidence and allow you to assert yourself. People will be less likely to take advantage of you.

When I first came here, I met a young man who got half his ear bitten off in a fight. He said to me, "People mistake kindness for weakness." At the time I shrugged him off but he was speaking truth and he learned it the hard way. I came to jail with the idea that criminals are better than everyone else: an enlightened segment of society. The truth is that criminals are just people – some are good, some are bad, some are very very bad, and they are the reason for my training. [△](http://www.guelphpeak.org)

Dear Noble Warrior

by T.A.Glaremi

MARCH 5TH, 1998

Once again we meet on the battlefield to fight the good fight. Blood, bone and flesh crumpled in spiritless bodies on the battlefield in the mighty roar of inspiration: "Death Before Dishonour".

A battle cry echoed down through the generations. I feel your strength fill my weary bones as I watch our people fall beside the force of many in their war to protect their loyalty to the others they call brother, sister.

Your hands reach under the schale of my armour to touch my willing flesh. We will fight for honour and truth. We will die together in loyalty and peace.

One last physical touch before the mighty force of Big Brother rushes us to the ground in our last dying moments.

Those moments will be the ones in which our spirits fly free from the pain of physical gravity and moral conscience.

note: I was at the P4W¹ fighting to stay close to my soul mate. The women were transferred to Grand Valley in Kitchener March of 1997. I was involuntarily transferred from P4W May 8th, 2000. I still feel the same. The money they spent on this place robbed our veterans of their supports as far as I am concerned. -T.A.G

¹ The Prison For Women "P4W" functioned as a maximum security women's prison between 1934-2000 in Kingston, ON. It was closed because of poor conditions.

Untitled

by Nyki Kish

As I lay here listening to the screams of women hurting, I wish I could scream too.

We are all screaming inside; most of us are just too scared and conditioned to have the courage to let it out.

So I internalize it; we internalize it, most of us.

And that creates an even bigger hurt, one that we carry alone.

But if we screamed out loud then we would be screaming together and our pain would not be isolated anymore, would it?

It wouldn't be displaced, causing cancer inside of us, causing ulcers, wearing down our teeth, wrinkling our skin; escaping us in fits of anger when we lash out against loved ones
Who suffer this too.

And the screws would have to hear it.

As they ought to.

They don't deserve the comfort of thinking

That keeping people in cages is okay

Because we are letting them think it's okay

By not screaming.

But rarely do we scream out loud

It's mostly a silence.

A silence perpetuating pain.



Time

by Mohamed Karim

DEDICATIONS

This poem goes out to all the inmates worldwide, Omar Khadr, Ashley Smith and my fellow cons in E-Max, Donnacona and CRC's Unit 9. Please brothers and sisters, remember god because remembering him might save us one more time.

TIME IS SHORT FOR INCARCERATION, WORLD OF freedom deprivation, Constant meditation about my past in civilization, God please help, the crown makes false accusations and exaggerating allegations. They say I committed a professional assassination, God please forgive me as you know it wasn't my intention. Arrested, accused, then came prison degradation. Strip-searched and traumatized, penalized and criticized for refusing to become institutionalized. Malnourished and supervised while taking my shower I complain, but they just say I'm having a hard time adapting to prison, integrating. Then health care gets involved and tries to steal my soul with their medication, I refuse and resist their temptation to make my mind dependent on pure intoxication. Then comes their accusations; saying I'm refusing help from a certified organization. I try to explain there are other ways without chemical sedation that lead my brain into full hibernation and serious hallucination. But they refuse to listen or engage in a peaceful conversation. Then comes their instigation and provocation. I take the bait and go off, then comes punishment in isolation following my administrative segregation. I complain again and ask for an investigation, but

inmates in our country have limited rights. So much for our so-called democratic nation and it's politicians full of promises and hypocritical manipulation, filled with criticism of other nations. For some of them, prison should be their final destination so they have a taste of their own medication.

Let's see how they like being locked up behind bars. Deprived of the very same rights guaranteed by the constitution and the United Nations.

Only god knows what the future holds as I wait for destiny to unfold. I'm living my life in survival mode. New rules and laws enforced by the inmate code. No love, no caring, hearts are cold and loyalty is sold.

I can't believe what I'm told, my father past away and they found his body on the side of the road. He was a good man with a serious tone. I heard he's now buried back home. God please help, I would love to visit him and pray on his tombstone, god please forgive him and admit him into heaven. Like him, I lived my life with so much expectations for fame. I played a dangerous game that almost drove me insane. At the end of it all there was no gain, only damage to my brain. A criminal record with a huge bloodstain and a heart full of shame. It's not

easy dealing with this much pain, reminiscing about the hard work that I've done in the past that simply went in vain. God please break my chain. I want out of here, out of this game. I miss my family and I hope they feel the same.

I miss my mom, my sisters, my brother, my kids and their mom. It's been years since I've been home. I wonder how much my children have grown. All three are now over seven. God please guide them in life, protect them and admit them into heaven. My oldest is now thirteen and probably macking on women without me being there to show him my old tricks. My daughter is now all grown, she's probably wondering when mommy and daddy are coming home. I was hoping to be there for her prom. My youngest is ten and I wonder will he find out that I'm doing life in the pen. Besides praying, all I can do is put my love and thoughts on a piece of paper with a pen. God please make it so we can see them again. God please bless and protect my baby mama. I wonder how she is, I haven't seen her in years. But I'm praying that she could be living in peace. She was the most caring and loving mother to our kids.

She was so patient despite all their needs. Finally true came our fears, we lost our kids because of discrimination and racial spears. As we walked away on the final court day, all three kids were in tears. As we looked on, we were hoping that it was just a nightmare soon to disappear.

God please bless my sisters, guide them in life and protect them from shady characters. As a teen I spent most of my time with friends watching movies about gangsters. Knowing what I know today, I would have spent way more time with my sisters, What can I say? As a youngster I thought I was the master of disaster, realizing now that I was the master of my own disaster. Speaking of disaster, I

wronged my brother in the most cruel way, I denied being his brother on a soccer field one day. It was the summer of 1993 in May. That was the last time I seen him, the last time I seen him play. God please guide him in life and show him the way. God please bless my mother and ask her forgiveness. She has now and forever disowned me. The word for mother in Arabic is Omy. At fifteen I thought I was leaving home only temporarily, attracted by the street life and its the women of Montreal's Little Italy. I'm now paying the price dearly, it turning out to be deadly. Now serving life behind bars with real gangsters and street superstars. January 16th 2006, was a dark day filled with fear. I killed an innocent man and for me it meant hell was near. I must repent my sin and it must be sincere. God please bless his soul and forgive his sins. He's the reason my heart is filled with shame and pain.

Yes outside of our windows is a prison wall, but we can't be demoralized, we must stand tall. Pray for forgiveness because it's only a matter of time before god makes the call for our soul to fall in line. The grave where our body will stall this truth, may justify our cause because in fact we're not alone living our lives interrupted. Millions around the world live what we live and it's okay. Our destiny in prison is just to stay. Living life tray by tray without much to do with other than pray. At the end of the day, god has the final say and only he knows why it has to be this way.

Now we must try to leave the past behind and focus on making it. Another challenge in life and we must face it. Some of us inmates act happy while incarcerated, but in reality I think we are just faking it. There is nothing fun about doing time, especially since that some of us are no longer in our prime. △

My Heroes, My Sheroes

by Nyki Kish

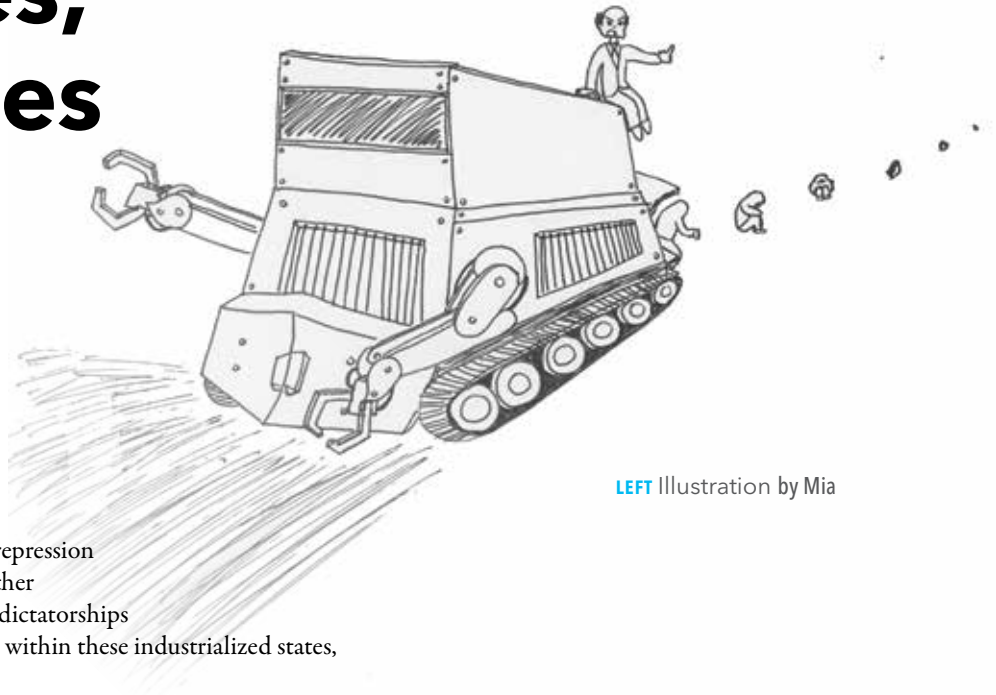
My heroes are kept in small cages,
Where they rise with the dawn
But never see the sun.
My heroes spend decades in SHUs¹
For quoting George Jackson
Or reading Machiavelli.

My heroes and sheroes resist.
In the midst of the harshest forms of repression
That one human can inflict upon another
Beneath the most fascist and ruthless dictatorships
That exist within invisible institutions within these industrialized states,
Which mindlessly scream liberty...
And freedom...
My heroes resist.

My sheroes have nothing,
No wealth and no fame.
They don't represent political or social trends;
They can't afford to.
And all my heroes have been handcuffed
At one time or another.
And all my sheroes survive
If only in spirit.
They are political prisoners,
Raised on reserves.
Who will go to prison for murder
When really it's coerced suicide.

My heroes do not walk to their executions.
They cling to life and to love until the end,
Until the sickness that plagues humanity
Swallows them.
Holds them down and looks them in their eye
And takes their lives
In the name of the law,
And justice.

¹ Special Housing Units



LEFT Illustration by Mia

Well, fuck the laws of domination.
Burn the fucking prisons down.
For that is the only just measure that can be taken
In a culture that thrives on domestication
Caging and conquering...colonization.
And for all who resist, there's prison.
And for all who are poor, there are prisons.
And the only crime that can be "corrected"
Is the existence of prisons.

None of my heroes participate
As functioning members of society.
My sheroes will not contribute,
They would rather exist on the streets.
Yes, all of the people I love and admire
Detest borders, states, oppression and the barbed-wire

From Prison to Therapeutic Community to Parole

by Sully O'Sullivan

**Content warning: Childhood sexual assault*

I CONTRIBUTED TO THE PEAK'S LAST ISSUE DEDICATED TO ONTARIO PRISONS with an article* entitled "C.S.C.= Common Sense Canceled, Not Correctional Service Canada." This write-up had an incredible response from other convicts and the public. Even former NHL player Theo Fleury responded with words of encouragement. If you did not get to read this article it was directed at the correctional system and how absolutely ignorant they continue to be when it comes to us adults who were raped as children and how they does not think there is a need for survivor programming — a need which, in reality, is just as great as the substance abuse and violence prevention programming.

After over three decades of suffering in silence, I finally came forward about my experience with how two priests from my family's parish raped me when I was 8-12 years old. In 2005, I came forward about Brother Bernard violently raping me almost daily (that's our trusted Catholic diocese) when I was attending St. John's training school from ages 15 to 16 . Since 2010 I have been advocating to have the Federal system look into the lack of survivor programming – with no luck yet!!!

On Sept 6th 2013 the national parole board granted me a day parole to Stonehenge Therapeutic Community for six months

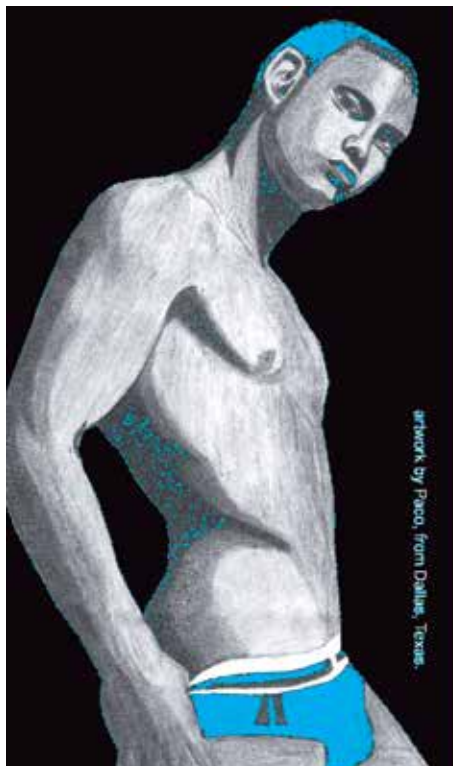
of the most intense programming anywhere in Ontario and only one other in Canada. I successfully completed the program on March 10th 2014, my day parole continues and I have been transferred to the halfway house here in St. Catherine's, Ontario where I write to you from today. While at Stonehenge, I made more contacts in relation to survivors groups and they all know my intentions of fighting for the convicts left within the Federal system to get survivors programming up and running. I encourage each and every individual who reads this to flood Facebook with the subject of survivor's programming desperately needed in the Federal Correctional System for all who are suffering in silence.

PLEASE write to me or send me an email to not only show support but to figure out how a march on Queens Park this Prisoner Justice Day will help!

sully_lennon@hotmail.com

Sully O'Sullivan, Salvation Army Booth Centre
184 Church St., St. Catharines ON L2R 3E7

**www.guelphpeak.org/vol51/2012/08*



artwork by Pico, from Dallas, Texas.



Gay penpal SEEKING SAME...

The Prisoner Correspondence Project is seeking gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual, transgender, and queer folks interested in becoming penpals with members of our communities currently in prison.

We seek to build community between incarcerated and non-incarcerated gays and trans people. Through our correspondence, we forge new strategies for friendship and survival, inside and outside of prisons.

We are always looking for new penpals.

prisoner Correspondence Project.com
info@prisoner Correspondence Project.com
(514) 848-7583



How Important is the Ground You Walk On?

by Chester Abbotsbury

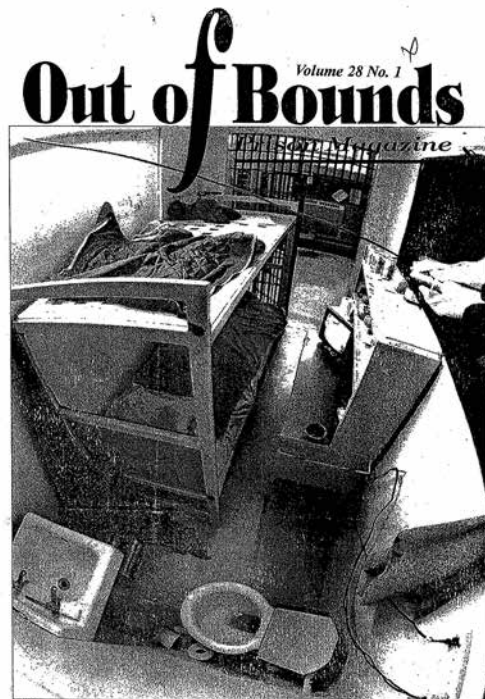
CHIEF BROOM HAS IT RIGHT IN *ONE Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* when he refers to the industrialized bureaucracy of the mental hospital that houses him as “the Combine.” The metaphor is a fitting one for all kinds of dehumanizing technocratic machinery that seems to have been built into the very foundations of our modern world, and is perhaps most poignant in those systems designed to deal with marginalized individuals.

While an average citizen, a normal ratepayer, might only periodically and begrudgingly encounter the pedantic and prickly peripherals of these behemoth constructs, never fully engaging the cogs and gears of the machine, there are those among us who are irrevocably shoved deep into the systems of control. You thought that renewing your license or getting a divorce was coldly and creepily impersonal in how the system handles you? Try jail.

My twenty-three month experience of living in a Provincial Remand Centre, specifically the now decommissioned Toronto Don Gaol, really hammered into me the fact that I was merely the product of some semi-functional and ultimately unfathomable process. Every nuance of life was controlled and good behaviour merely expected and not in any way rewarded apart from the avoidance

of punishment. There were times I commiserated with lab rats, entertaining jolts of electricity from the experiment floor each time they transgress some rule totally incomprehensible to them. Deviation from the accepted norms could have had disastrous effects when one sat in front of a Judge or a Jury of peers as “Institutional Charges” of insubordination or medication hoarding or fighting or picking your nose or looking the wrong way on a Tuesday or whatever other failure to recognize authority were read into the Court Record.

We lend more credence to a fact that is written than one that is not— another aspect of the social machinery and its output. Imagine, then, living in a world where the rules as written are kept from you, although you are expected to immediately adhere to them. Such a world is the remand system where untried, not yet criminally convicted citizens are detained indefinitely with many of their civil rights annulled and voided by the fact of the arrest that brought them there. The rules of the Institution are to be obeyed at the same time that detainees are attempting to somehow fit into and stay safe and alive in a strange, violent world containing some large measure of misanthropes and malcontents who demand their own brand of obedience to another unwritten set of rules, the second “Criminal Code”.



I felt rejected in some sort of societal quality control process, being reconditioned or just held back until the system could release me after a further inspection for another go 'round the market. We were all packaged alike, in temporary containers, bright and orange like some fall vegetable or citrus fruit. Our baby-blue "Don Boxers" reminded us of "that little patch of blue we prisoners call the sky," as Oscar Wilde once so aptly said. Our memories faded fast, though, for we were only taken out to "yard" once every six to eight weeks at the Don. And I use the word "yard" reluctantly here, for the outdoor recreation area was a patchily asphalt paved quadrangle about the size of a single tennis court. The guards were separated from us in the yard as the controls of a machine usually are from the bits that go about the insides of it. Surrounding the "yard" are the four, five-storey tall matrix of the red brick interior walls of the jail itself.

The bit of sky we had access to, adulterated only by another grid of netting to catch "packages" thrown from outside, once every month or two was indeed a "little patch" due to the sheer height of the barriers. No spiny razor-wire was needed there. The antennae of the security establishment's radio-frequency telecommunications infrastructure beamed down at us from one five-floor-high corner. We joked that it was a Mind Control beacon. My circuit with the world was broken and replaced by one with the cogs and relays of the system.

This feeling of disconnection from the world and from myself, this utter dehumanization,

continued until I plead out and was subsequently transferred to the Federal Prison System to serve my sentence. I recall vividly the feeling of putting on my "prison blues" dungarees. Putting on jeans never felt so good after two years of orange coveralls. There is something emancipating and invigorating about donning jeans on even the best of days. My next glimpse of existence came when we were let out to yard that first day at Millhaven in a crisp, early January late in the evening. Jupiter and the stars gazed down on me and reminded that there was something, and a lot of it, beyond the mechanisms of man.

Because of my Aboriginal ancestry, I participated in the Native cultural programs there. When the snow had melted and it had warmed up enough, in late March, we were taken outside onto the small, caged and razor-wired sacred ground where the prison's sweats and ceremonies are held. It had been twenty-six months since I had a full shoulder to shoulder canopy of daytime sky above me.

What truly felt like a moment of reconciliation and redemption of sorts was when I took my institutional shoes and institutional socks off and felt the Earth underneath me with nothing in between.

I had exited the machine, at last, and all it took was admitting a dubious guilt once I was through processing. I felt alive, my toes scrunching the sodden and muddy grass between them. You could not possibly understand how wonderful that act was, that baptism in overcast sky, wet sod, and cold dirt. I felt reborn. I was a human again. △

Freedom is a State of Mind

by T.A. Glaremin

I've been in prison 30 years,
In the belly of the beast with my hopes and fears.
Hoping I could find the good in me,
So I can be forgiven and be set free.

My Tribe is strong, they haven't left me yet,
I know it's because they know I love them,
And that they'll never forget.
They are worried about me being in the hole,
Hurt, crippled, hungry, naked and cold.
The only thing that made them okay,
Was listening to my songs and words, they say.

Love is deeper than any victim's revenge,
All the families know this they keep their teeth clenched.
Every time they have a drug dog after them,
Metal detectors, strip searches, ion scanners
CPIC*, until you're going round the bend.

We see it all my Tribe and I,
It's the strength of our love that makes us high.
So the justice system can kiss me ass,
I'll be free one day, dead or alive,
I won't forget, if I'm living or not,
I will remember the good ones,
And the bad ones I fought.

Better days ahead, my brother used to say
Spent 45 years in prison, got out an old man,
And now he's dead today.
I know they'll do the same to me one day,
But regardless, if they forgive me,
I'll still be set free.
But freedom's not forever cuz we're all born to die, BABY!

★Canadian Police Information Centre is the central police database where Canada's law enforcement agencies can access information about criminal records, stolen vehicles, etc...



Call for Submissions

OVER THE WALL is a newsletter on actions against the prison system in Ontario and is seeking submissions!

Published and distributed twice annually, the newsletter is a project of End the Prison Industrial Complex (EPIC), — a grassroots group based in Kingston, Ontario that is working toward the abolition of prisons.

In publishing this newsletter, our goal is to share information about ongoing struggles in Ontario prisons and prison-related actions by supporters on the outside. Our first edition went out in April 2014 and features articles from two inmates at Collins Bay Institution giving details and analysis on the strike undertaken by inmates in federal prisons across Canada in resistance to the thirty percent wage cut and elimination of CORCAN incentive pay imposed in October of last year.

The submission deadline for our second issue is September 1st.

If you are currently incarcerated in Ontario we encourage you to send us news updates and stories of actions, protests, disputes and resistance going on inside. Send your submissions to:

EPIC
427 Princess St, Suite 409
Kingston, ON K7L 5S9

If you are on the outside and have friends or contacts inside who may be interested in submitting, please pass along this callout. We also include a brief timeline of outside actions against prisons or in support of prisoner struggles, so if you know of an action that should be included please send us the date, and a brief description.



Reportback: The 15th International Conference on Penal Abolition (ICOPA) in Ottawa

by Mina Vonomechingues

IMAGINE. ROOMS FULL OF PEOPLE OLD AND young, queer and straight, academic and straight up punks all talking about the same thing; the need to abolish the prison system across the world.

This sums up the atmosphere at the 15th bi-annual ICOPA conference which took place the weekend of June 13th-15th in Ottawa. With over 300 individuals in attendance, the conference brought together academics, journalists, activists, practitioners, formerly incarcerated individuals and others from around the world. All of whom are working towards the abolition of imprisonment, the penal system, carceral controls and the prison industrial complex more broadly.

HOW DID ICOPA BEGIN?

In the mid 1970's, the Quaker Committee on Jails and Justice in Canada acknowledged that there were several different

groups engaged in prison abolition across the world. Because of this, they determined that there was a need to establish an international forum where the politics and practices of prison abolitionism could be discussed. With this thought in place, and the efforts of many prison abolitionists along with the vision of conference founder Ruth Morris, the first ICOPA was held in 1982 in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Since then, the conference has been held every two years in different countries all over the world. The conference has been held in Ireland, Trinidad and Tobago, the Netherlands, and France to name a few.

Since the first conference, the mission of ICOPA has maintained the same and is as follows:

- ➔ Provide a forum for the flow and exchange of ideas advancing abolitionist goals
 - ➔ Contribute to the public sensitization and education on abolitionist issues
 - ➔ Addressing questions of viable alternatives to the prison industrial complex
 - ➔ Acknowledge and involve those most affected by penal policies, people inside and those connected to them.
- ➔ Motivate the abolitionist community while creating solidarity

MY EXPERIENCE AT ICOPA: THE GOODS AND THE BADS

If someone were to ask me how my weekend went I would respond with “nothing short of extraordinary.” However internally I think that the conference, and my time spent in Ottawa, was both up and

down and definitely evoked a lot of different feelings and emotions.

To be quite real, I had not thought about the actual conference until I was sitting in my hotel in Ottawa trying to figure out what workshop to go to. I had joined other members of the End Immigration Detention Network* (#migrantstrike) in an amazing action earlier that day and had spent so much energy on the action as well as organizing how to get individuals to the conference that I had not looked at the conference itself.

Arriving to my first workshop I realized that I had never been to an entire conference focused on prison abolition. As I walked up to the university I began talking to an older woman from the Netherlands who had gone to the last three conferences. I was immediately struck by the fact that there are so many people across the world that really want to take prisons apart and who are so different than the community that I am a part of. That made me feel all sorts of ways.

The first workshop I went to was heart wrenching. It had to do with families of loved ones on the inside and everyone's story was different but tied to the fact that their partners, sons, daughters and friends were still in jail. The majority are facing a life in prison. I thought about how it feels to talk about such a personal thing in front of so many strangers and how much courage, resiliency and strength that can take. Their stories made my skin tingle with urgency and stress. Sometimes we get so caught up in our lives and our own causes we forget about all the other stories and people that exist outside of our bubbles.

Throughout the weekend I attended several panels and workshops that varied from disability and incarceration, everyday abolition, immigration detention, to queer and trans prisoners justice. I will be honest, some workshops weren't the best. Many were overly academic and had a tendency to pathologize the "prisoner." There were definitely more white folks than there were people of colour which was problematic given the context. Despite this, I found that overall the workshops, panels and plenaries were extremely transformative, inspiring and useful. At one point I was sitting in a workshop with an older white man that kept talking and my first thought was annoyance of him taking

up so much space. However as I began to listen, I realized that he was Robert Gaucher a man instrumental for creating and maintaining the Journal of Prisoners on Prisons (the JPP) and that he has been active in the prison abolitionist struggle for over forty years. After doing a more personal conversation with him I had to check myself with the fact that sometimes we forget all of the wisdom that we can plug into and the importance of collective history in the struggle. It was amazing to later see Robert Gaucher and Ashanti Alston a former Black Panther and current anarchist embrace each other as old friends.

I also found that the conference allowed for so many hard but intentional chats between my friends and I. I mean, this could have also been because of the full Honey Moon that took place on the Friday of the conference. Either way, it was weirdly refreshing to be checking ourselves on the ways that we treat each other and noticing people being vulnerable in ways that I don't often get to see.

The weekend hit an all-time high for me when the conference was nearing the end. The End Immigration Detention Network was slated to host a rally that marched up to Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA) headquarters. The rally was in solidarity with the hundreds of immigration detainees boycotting their detention reviews while being locked up in maximum security prisons. It felt amazing to have all of these prison abolitionists by marching alongside each other, chanting, holding signs and sweating beneath the sun. Although the cops stopped and ticketed our accessibility van, we did not let that bring our spirits down and blocked the entire intersection until our friends joined us and chanted "We don't leave our friends behind!" while we waited. Arriving at CBSA headquarters, the organizers of the rally handed out names of the individuals currently detained or deported while on immigration detention and chalk so that their names could be written on the CBSA building, street and sidewalk. I cannot describe to you the feeling that burned inside of me while watching people silently writing names all over the block. At one point a friend of mine who was recently released from immigration detention came and

I had to check myself with the fact that sometimes we forget all of the wisdom that we can plug into and the importance of collective history in the struggle.

embraced me and we shared tears of happiness. In that moment, it felt like we were winning.

If there was one thing I gained from this conference it was the overwhelming feeling that we are not alone. There are so many people all over the world that want what we want. I learnt and was reminded that there are infinite strategies to abolish prison and that it depends on our creativity and willingness to work together. The struggle to end imprisonment, whether it be through mental institutions, prisons, borders precedes us and will continue long after we are gone. Each time we fight and work and learn and are patient with each other, we are undoing what the state has done to us. All in all I would definitely recommend attending the next ICOPA conference, wherever in the world it may be. [△](#)

★see page 30 to learn more about EIDN



Seeking Submissions!

Voices Unchained is a new publication seeking artwork, articles, memoirs, poems, rants, and other creations by incarcerated women!

We publish four issues a year, pieces that we accept can also be posted online on our website with your permission. We're looking for content relating to any and all issues that you feel are important for other women who are in conflict with the law, and the general public, to hear about and understand.

To subscribe to our publication, learn more, or submit art and writing, please write to us at

Voices Unchained
1 Euclid Place
Toronto ON
M6J 1J8

Untitled

by Terri M.

The justice system. How ironic that be its title when so many within face nothing but continuous patronization and discrimination. Dehumanized and degraded. Stripped of our dignity, of whatever self-respect we had left before we hit the misfortunate and horrifying fork in our road which there was no turning back from. Stripped of our soul, soon forgotten for everything except our shortcomings, our faults, our mistakes.

I've heard that only he who has not sinned should cast the first stone. I by no means consider myself religious, but after wanting to die for 23 out of the 24 years of my life and surviving unexplainable things, attempts to bring myself to where I thought I belonged, I've come to realize that there is a purpose. This idea of seeing an individual as toxic waste, or garbage and disposable— when you have no identity you become a chameleon. Becoming whoever or whatever we need to be to survive in that moment. I was once a person who cast judgement, who walked through life with venom and rage seething from me, a person who was driven by hate...a way of security...not so much. Everything's fine until you end up in that place that you *never* could have seen yourself in and then you realize it's not so simple anymore.

Do our mistakes define the depths of our hearts? In an instant you can turn into a monster, but what are you really? Our mistakes, our actions- all of these things we are accountable for, and to move forward, to heal, do you justify where you fucked up? Do you blame everyone else? No, it all starts with you. Self-hate is enough to destroy someone, it's worse than something someone else can do to me. We are our own worst enemies. It takes courage, tremendous strength and pure truth with yourself to be able to look inside and take a hold of your soul, of your heart, and be proud of that. We don't have to be our stories or our fuck ups. We have a chance to be so much more. Each and everyone bears the strength of an eagle but only each of us as an individual is capable of spreading those wings to soar, to reach heights unimaginable.

Summer News Briefs:

March 22nd to July 11th, 2014

by the Peak Collective

MARCH 22

Akwesasne Territory: John Boots, 43, of Akwesasne First Nation, was arrested and charged with two counts of mischief stemming from a series of blockades near Tyendinaga demanding a federal inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women.

MARCH 31

Mi'kmaq Territory: A group of Mi'kmaq women shut down a Maritime Energy Association briefing on the province's plan to move forward on oil and gas projects. Over one hundred youth occupied the hotel's lobby in support of this action as part of the PowerShift Atlantic conference.

MARCH 31

Moncton, NB: The week long trial of Mi'kmaq Warriors Germaine 'Junior' Breaux and Aaron Francis begins.

APRIL 3

Kitasso/Xaixais Territory (BC): The DFO has backed down on re-opening a commercial herring fishing operation on the Kitasu Bay after Kitasoo/Xaixais

hereditary chiefs refused to back down from their position that the fishery should be called off. The Kitasso/Xaixais First Nation has revived traditional practices of spawn on kelp to harvest herring roe (eggs) in the bay and fear that the entrance of commercial vessels would devastate the weakened population. Officials agreed to keep commercial herring gillnet boats away from waters set off-limits by the community.

APRIL 4

Onondaga Territory: About sixty men, women and children marched to the Onondaga Nation School this morning to take a stand against domestic violence and child abuse. The goal of the walk was to show the children of the Onondaga Nation that these men will not commit, condone or stay silent about abuse against women or children.

MAY 1

Kahnawake Mohawk Territory: Quebec and Akwesasne Mohawk Police have arrested twenty-eight people, on hunt for seven others after a major tobacco raid in

Kahnawake, Mohawk Territory near the QC border. Police confiscated approximately 40,000 kilograms of tobacco. This is the first instance of a major crackdown following the federal governments adoption of Bill C- 10, Contraband Tobacco Act.

MAY 20

Burlington, ON: About twenty protesters blockaded the road to an exposed section of Enbridge's Line 9 pipeline. Enbridge was conducting integrity digs on the site.

MAY 27

Moncton, NB: A man from Elispogtog First Nation pled guilty to five charges related to anti-shale gas protests last year. Jason Augustine, 34 pled guilty to assaulting a police officer, two counts of obstructing a police officer, and one count of mischief in connection. He was sentenced to 18 months of probation.

MAY 29

Saskatoon, SK: Kinew James died alone in her cell after pushing a button to call for help.

She died at Saskatoon Regional Psychiatric Centre, where more inmates have died in the past seven years than any other federal prison in Canada.

James' mother states; "They didn't listen to her when she pulled the ringer. She was just ignored," Campbell said. "They should've listened to her call for help. But they didn't ... inmates are sent to SRPC when it is determined that their mental health needs cannot be met at a mainstream institution or that they require more intensive/in-depth assessment, interventions and/or treatment."

WEEK OF MAY 29

'Canada': A group of federal inmates has lost a 1.25 million-dollars class-action lawsuit over the right to wear protest T-shirts with upside-down Maple Leafs to mark the annual Prisoners' Justice Day.

Ontario Superior Court Justice Barbara Conway refused to certify the class-action lawsuit, and ruled they should file a grievance with prison authorities instead.

JUNE 2

Lindsay, ON: 100 immigrant detainees start a month long boycott of their detention reviews, critiquing the biased, unfair and stacked proceedings held against them.

JUNE 3

Vancouver, BC: Police raided the house of radicals involved in Indigenous resistance as well as anarchist projects in the city. Under the pretext of investigating six mischief charges related to graffiti tags of "no pipelines" around the city.

JUNE 4

Moncton, NB: Justin Bourque, a 24-year-old from Moncton, shot five members of the RCMP, killing three and severely injuring two. On June 6th, Bourque was found and taken into custody, ending a manhunt that lasted over twenty-eight hours.

JUNE 13

Hamilton, ON: The Tower, Hamilton's anarchist social centre, has officially opened!! Check it out at: www.the-tower.ca

Ottawa, ON: End Immigration Detention Activists lock themselves to a ten foot tall mock scale outside of the Border Control headquarters.

JUNE 15

Ottawa, ON: Over one hundred people march from the University of Ottawa to a Canada Border Services Office in support of immigrants protesting their detention reviews in Lindsay. Chalk is used to write the names of striking detainees on the ground around the building.

JUNE 17

British Columbia: The Northern Gateway Pipeline is approved by the National Energy Board. Hundreds gathered in Vancouver for a march to protest the decision.

JUNE 16

Mexico City: The last hearing was held against Amelie, Fallon and Carlos, the three anarchists arrested in Mexico on January 5th on charges of damages and attacks on public peace.

Guelph, ON: About forty people gathered outside Guelph City Hall to participate in a rally marking the "3rd National Day of Action to Stop the Cuts to Refugee Health Care." Members of Fuerza/Puwersa and Growing Community Health spoke out against the cuts, which have led to refugees and refugee claimants being denied basic hospital care. Rallies were held in seventeen cities across the country.

JUNE 19

'Canada': The government passes "Strengthening Citizenship Act" which has been renamed the "Stealing Citizenship Act".



ABOVE 'Confront Canada Day' rally on July 1st in Vancouver, BC

JUNE 24

Haudenosaunee Territory: The Haldimand Council has ordered the removal of a blockade put up to protect land in Caledonia that was reclaimed in Caledonia in 2006.

JUNE 26

Moncton, NB: Mi'kmaq warriors Germain Breau and Aaron Francis were found guilty of assault and firearm charges. Breau was convicted of possession of a weapon for a dangerous purpose and five counts of pointing a firearm. Francis was also convicted of possession of a weapon for a dangerous purpose but was found not guilty of five charges related to molotov cocktails being thrown at police. Both will be remain in custody until their sentencing hearings on July 25th. Both Breau and Francis have been in custody since the October 17th, 2013 raids

JUNE 26

Toronto, ON: Jason Kenney's speech was disrupted by two members of NOII after a moratorium is passed on the restaurant sector of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program.

JULY 1

Vancouver, BC: Approximately one hundred people attended a "Confront Canada Day" rally and march in Vancouver, BC. The rally began at Clark Park in East Vancouver with indigenous people drumming, singing and speaking against the colonial history of Canada.

JULY 2

Tsilhqot'in Territory: The Supreme Court of Canada has granted a declaration of Aboriginal title to the Tsilhqot'in (chilco-teen) over 1,750 square kilometres of territory in a historic ruling handed down last week.

This is the first time the high court has ever granted a declaration of Aboriginal title to a First Nation. The ruling also acknowledges Indigenous nations can claim occupancy and control over vast swaths of land beyond specific settlement sites, provides more clarity on Aboriginal title and sets out the parameters for government "incursion" into land under Aboriginal title.

JULY 4

'Canada': After the Federal Court ruled that the 2012 modifications made to the Interim Federal Health Program for Refugees are unconstitutional, the Federal Government has announced they will be appealing the decision. In 2012, the Conservative government legislated sweeping changes to refugee health care, slashing access to medication and doctor visits.

JULY 5

Surrey, BC: 150 people rallied against the controversial Bill C-24.

JULY 8

Alberta: Omar Khadr has been granted an appeal of transfer from the maximum security prison at the Bowden Institution in Alberta to a provincial prison. The Federal government will be appealing the decision.

JULY 11

Kanehsatake: This day marks the 24th anniversary of the police raid on Oka. The Oka Crisis involved the Mohawk territories of Kanehsatake/Oka & Kahnawake, both located near Montreal, Quebec. The standoff began with an armed police assault on a blockade at Kanehsatake on July 11th, 1990. [△](#)

**INDIGENOUS PEOPLES MAKE UP
3% OF THE CANADIAN POPULATION
21% OF THE MALE PRISON POPULATION
30% OF THE FEMALE PRISON POPULATION**



**CANADIAN PRISONS
APARTHEID
IN ACTION**

LEFT Canadian
Prison by Jesse
Purcell



End Immigration Detention

by the End Immigration Detention Network

ABOVE Provincial Day of Action rally in Guelph October 8th, 2013

ON SEPTEMBER 17TH 2013, ONE HUNDRED AND ninety one immigration detainees held in the Central East Correctional Centre in Lindsay, Ontario, began a non-cooperation protest.

They went on hunger strike and at first demanded better prison conditions. Soon the strikers demands expanded to the entire immigration detention system that detains them, requesting a review of the detention process and demanding their freedom.

A few weeks ago, the strikers began a boycott of their release procedures and a damning report reveals political interference in what is supposed to be an impartial legal process. This is a brief history of the struggle to date: the strike, the ongoing resistance on the inside and the campaign that continues on the outside.

On Wednesday, September 18th, 2013 an organizer with No One Is Illegal-Toronto gets a call informing them that detainees in immigration hold, recently transferred from across Ontario to a maximum security prison in Lindsay, Ontario have gone on hunger strike and refused to enter their cells.

Running Down The Walls, an annual run to raise money for the Anarchist Black Cross is in communication with prisoners at this time. Organizers from Fuerza/Puwersa in Guelph set up a TrappCall phone line, which allows detainees to collect call cellphones on the outside. They begin to get calls from people who have decided to take a stand against what has become their indefinite detention. Connections are quickly made with organizers from No One Is Illegal-Toronto and form what is to become the End Immigration Detention Network

(EIDN). In conjunction with the detainees, activists on the outside craft a set of demands focusing on prison conditions and release a petition alongside a solidarity statement signed by migrant justice organizations across the country.

On September 23rd, activists in Guelph drop a banner from a bridge and on September 30th they visit CBSA offices in Kitchener Waterloo. During this time, the End Immigration Detention Network is publishing recordings of interviews with detainees who are speaking out. By this point, some of the detainees demands, including better canteen options and better food on range are being met by prison officials.

However, as the hunger strike enters its third week, detainees who call the Trapp line are less interested in improving their substandard conditions and want to focus on the reasons for their detention. On October 4th, the campaign releases the four key demands which stand to this day.

1. Release all migrant detainees who have been held for longer than ninety days.
2. End arbitrary and indefinite detention: If removal cannot happen within ninety days, immigration detainees must be released.
3. No maximum security holds: Immigration detainees should not be held in maximum security provincial jails; they must have access to basic services and be close to family members.
4. Overhaul the adjudication process: Give migrants fair and full access to legal aid, bail programs and pro bono representation.

The following day, supporters send in photographs of themselves holding signs saying, 'I support the migrant detainee strike.' The actions of those inside have quickly become known as #MigrantStrike.

On October 6th, an interview is published with detainee Ayad Alshmmaray, who at the time had been in immigration detention for almost five years. Ayad suffers from lung cancer and was not receiving the appropriate attention while in detention. He was worried that he would die from cancer while in detention. Ayad kept in touch via the trapp line right up until the day he was deported to Iraq, on May 22nd, 2014.

During this period, Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) promises numerous times to meet with the detainees but to date they never have.

Three weeks after the strike began, friends, family members and supporters across Ontario take to the streets in a provincial day of action to bring attention to indefinite detention. Actions take place in Guelph, Kitchener, Kingston, Lindsay, London,

Ottawa, Peterborough and Toronto, where supporters dressed in orange jumpsuits and tied in chains hold out empty food plates and deliver a petition signed by over twelve hundred people to the office of Madeleine Meilleur, Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. The Minister's office publicly denies that over one hundred detainees are on strike and have continued to refuse to comment.

In response to the resistance on the inside, immigration enforcement place hunger strikers in segregation, begin to deport or release key strike organizers and move others into prisons across Ontario. Despite this, the strike actions continue.

On October 19th, Amin Mjasiri speaks directly from segregation, where he is on day twenty six of his hunger strike. Amin would remain on hunger strike for sixty five days, and is detained to this day.

On October 21st, the End Immigration Detention Network releases an interview with Martin Sisay and Lynval Daley speaking about the hunger strike, segregation and resistance. Their struggle brings some success when Martin is finally released on February 21st, 2014 and joins the campaign on the outside.

On day thirty-six of the strike, Michael Mvogo, in maximum security detention for seven years, files a complaint with the Working Group on Arbitrary Detentions at the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights demanding an end to his indefinite detention and the creation of a 'presumptive period'. The same day, the Network releases the 'We will not be locked up and forgotten' video. A decision on Mvogo's detention is expected over the summer.

On October 31st, EIDN publishes, 'Meet the Hunger Strikers', a profile of five of the men they have been in touch with who have been on hunger strike and locked up in segregation as punishment.

On November 5th, Tarek Loubani and John Greyson visit the jail in Lindsay with other organizers and demand their release. Loubani and Greyson, who had recently returned to Canada after a six-week detention in an Egyptian prison, including time in solitary confinement, call for people to speak out for the detainees as they had for them. Their visit brings significant media attention to the campaign.

On the forty-seventh day of his hunger strike, the network releases an updated interview with Amin Mjasiri, recorded on the same day John and Tarek were denied a request to visit him because of his commitment to the strike. Public Safety Minister Steven Blaney remains silent.

In November, the Toronto Star runs two stories on the strike. The first profiles Mbuyisa

FAMILY DAY PROJECTION BOMB AT THE IMMIGRATION REFUGEE BOARD

LEFT Family Day Projection Bomb in Toronto February 17th, 2014

RIGHT/CLOCKWISE

1 Father's Day March to CBSA Headquarters in Ottawa June 15th, 2014

2 'Get on the Bus' Rally at Lindsay Prison, December 14th, 2013

3 Father's Day March to CBSA Headquarters in Ottawa June 15th, 2014

4 Supports confront the Chief of Staff for Madeleine Meilleur, Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, Toronto October 8th, 2013

Rally with us on Feb 28th at Toronto CBSA HQ

Makhubu, a South African anti-apartheid icon who has been languishing in immigration detention in Canada for almost a decade. This is followed by an exposé on the hundreds held in Canada's immigration cells.

Ten days later, family members and organisers announce they have lost touch with Amin Mjasiri and have grave concerns for his well being. A petition is sent calling for his release.

On November 26th, organisers announce a rally to be held at the prison in Lindsay on December 14th. In response to the call for a demonstration on the outside, immigration detainees decide to initiate a twenty-four hour fast inside on the same day. Supporters respond by calling for a twenty-four hour global solidarity fast to accompany the protest at Lindsay Jail.

As opposition begins to grow against indefinite immigration detention in Canada, a supporters statement is released on December 11th, signed by fifty leading labour, civil society, grassroots groups and individuals, including Naomi Klein, John Greyson, Council of Canadians, Canadian Union of Postal Workers and

the Law Union of Ontario. Organizations can endorse the demands here: endimmigrationdetention.com/endorsers

December 14th brings snow storms and freezing temperatures to Ontario but the rally goes ahead as planned. Three busloads of families and supporters drive hours through snow squalls and are joined by many more residents of the Lindsay and Peterborough area. The almost two hundred strong crowd's chants are heard by the detainees inside and the banging on their cell walls can be heard across the fences. A full hour after the buses depart, organisers receive a call from a detainee with deafening noise in the background. When asked what was happening inside, he responds, "They've been yelling 'freedom' in unison for hours!" Solidarity actions are held elsewhere, including a banner drop in Vancouver.

On December 20th, the National Post runs a story on CBSA's botched attempt to deport a man to a country he wasn't from with a forged passport purchased from a middleman. More reports have since emerged of CBSA using fake documents to deport migrants to countries

that they have no association with.

In January 2014, as African asylum seekers in Israel start their own hunger strike in protest of their detention, organisers in Toronto and Vancouver stage solidarity actions.

On Family Day weekend, family members of detainees release a striking and heartfelt statement, 'When will they return?' The same day, supporters project a massive image on to the border control offices at 74 Victoria Street in Toronto where decisions to detain and deport migrants are made every day. Guelph organisers drop a banner with the same message.

February 28th 2014 marks the two-month anniversary of Lucia Vega Jimenez's attempted suicide while in immigration enforcement custody awaiting deportation. She died eight days later. To mark this and the five month anniversary of #MigrantStrike, organizers stage a 'Migrant Dignity not Migrant Death' action at the Greater Toronto Enforcement Center, responsible for immigration detention and over forty deportations a day. Posters are plastered



inside GTEC holding the enforcement officers personally responsible. The event is documented in the 'Enough is Enough' video. Rallies and actions are also held in Vancouver, Montreal and London.

On March 26th, a public forum on the struggle against immigration detention is held in Toronto. Speakers include recently released Lindsay detainee and strike organiser Martin Sisay, Maru Mora Villalpando from Latino Advocacy in Seattle and supporter of 1,200 immigrant detainees on hunger strike in Tacoma, Washington and Tarek Loubani. Supporters in attendance write and record messages to detainees and Stephen Harper.

On May Day 2014, International Workers Day (May 1st), supporters march in Toronto to 'Honour Our Communities' and demand an end to immigration detention.

On June 2nd, over 100 detained immigrants start a historical month-long boycott of their detention reviews, insisting the process is biased, unfair and stacked against them. The boycott is coordinated between detainees caged in three separate maximum security prisons across Ontario

– the Central East Correctional Centre in Lindsay, Central North Correctional Centre in Penetanguishene and Toronto's Metro West Detention Centre.

On June 9th, the End Immigration Detention Network launches a groundbreaking report which raises red flags about troubling patterns in the detention review process which keeps immigrants detained. EIDN insists that political inference may be taking place in the detention review process. 'Arbitrary, Indefinite and Unfair: Truth about immigration detention' is a startling exposé on immigration detention in Canada and is released along with a video asking why the Harper government has detained over 80,000 people without charge and featuring the voices of detainees boycotting their detention reviews. The report causes a stir and is featured on CBC Metro Morning. Toronto Star publishes an official editorial.

Network organisers head to Ottawa for the 15th International Conference on Penal Abolition, where they present two workshops linking immigration detention to traditional abolitionist struggles. On Friday June 13th, organizers use ten foot

tall Scales of Injustice to lock down Border Control Headquarters in Ottawa to proclaim that there is no justice in immigration detention.

June 15th sees a Father's Day March to End Immigration Detention from the University of Ottawa to Canada Border Services Agency headquarters in downtown Ottawa. Supporters hear a live recording from a detainee in Lindsay and chalk the names of those detained on the street in front of the CBSA offices.

These actions conclude an important period in the struggle as we look ahead to September and the anniversary of the beginning of the strike. A cross-Canada day of action is being called for on September 17th – please get in touch with us at migrantstrike@gmail.com if you would like to organize an action. As thousands of temporary workers' permits expire in 2015 under the "four years in, four years out" rule, and as refugee and family exclusion continues, we expect a huge increase in detentions as people refuse to be treated as cheap labour and build lives within and despite these violent borders. [△](#)



CRIMINALIZATION KILLS!
STOP BILL C-36!

Bill C-36 Threatens Sex Workers

by Sex Workers' Action Group Guelph

SEX WORKERS' ACTION GROUP: GUELPH (SWAGG) IS AN ORGANIZATION of people involved in the sex trade in the Guelph area and our allies. We are responding to Minister of Justice Peter MacKay's so-called "Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act", or Bill C-36, with great sadness and outrage. Bill C-36 would criminalize virtually every aspect of the sex trade, including advertising, negotiating and purchasing sexual services. We see this bill for what it is: an attack on sex workers' dignity, agency, and right to work safely and on our own terms.

SWAGG is joining sex workers and their allies in opposing Bill C-36, which has passed its second reading in the House of Commons and is currently being reviewed by the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. We reject this proposed legislation for the following reasons:

- ➔ Bill C-36 fails to uphold the spirit of the Supreme Court's Bedford decision, which ruled that laws preventing sex workers from communicating with clients and negotiating the terms of their work outdoors are unconstitutional.
- ➔ Bill C-36 will disproportionately affect sex workers who are already vulnerable to violence and criminalization, including youth, those without homes, street-based workers, parents, those without status, and Indigenous people.
- ➔ Bill C-36 dangerously assumes that all sex work is sex trafficking, which denies the fact that sex workers can and do make choices for themselves
- ➔ Bill C-36 attempts to use feminist(?) language to appeal to the idea of fighting gender violence, but in doing so, defines all sex workers as victims and suggests that the bill can save sex workers from harm. We note that the Harper government has closed numerous women's shelters across Canada, intensified the criminalization of

migrant families, and failed to address the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women. For these reasons, we assert that Bill C-36 is not based on genuine desire to aid exploited people, but on a conservative ideology around sexuality, morality, and crime.

- ➔ Peter MacKay and the Ministry of Public safety failed to meaningfully consult with sex workers or sex worker advocacy groups about the impacts of this legislation, and instead, consulted with religious and right-wing abolitionists who called themselves advocates for sex workers.

As experts on our own experiences in the sex trade, we know that further criminalization impedes our ability to make our own choices and puts us in harm's way. We know that this legislation is fundamentally based on stigma and outdated morality. We reject MacKay and the Harper government's dehumanizing characterization of all sex workers as unwilling victims, and instead celebrate our skills, resilience, and wisdom. We maintain that a culture of stigma and criminalization makes selling sexual services dangerous, not the sex trade itself, and that sex workers, not government officials, are uniquely qualified to decide what harms us and what makes us safer.

Sex workers across Ontario and Canada are organizing opposition to Bill C-36 and the criminalization of those in the sex trade. Together, we are affirming our dignity, agency, and our right to work without fearing that police violence and dangerous legislation will further impair our ability to work safely and effectively. Δ

Note: As of this printing, Bill C-36 has passed its second reading and is being reviewed by the "Justice Committee of the House of Commons and will likely pass in the coming weeks.

Update from Grassy Narrows

An update on the future of one family's fight to preserve their traditional traplines. by Alex Hundert

SINCE THE INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED FOR THE LAST ISSUE of *The Peak* (On the Land Vol. 53 Iss 4) took place, there have been significant shifts in the short-term terrain of struggle at Grassy Narrows (Asubpeeschoseewagong First Nation), while from a longer term perspective, the picture remains the same.

In response to pledges of resistance combined with a request for Environmental Assessment from the Ministry of the Environment, clearcut logging within Grassy Narrows Traditional Territory will not be taking place this year; this year's Annual Work Schedule was finally released by the Ministry of Natural Resources, with no cut-blocks scheduled within sixty kilometers of Grassy Narrows. However, the ten year Forestry Management Plan remains unchanged, with dozen of clearcut blocks throughout Grassy Narrows Territory scheduled for harvesting before 2022.

Meanwhile, as long term strategies to protect the territory are implemented, community members at Grassy Narrows continue to press the Ontario

Government for land protection and to address ongoing problems suffered as a result of the mercury poisoning of the Wabigoon and English River Systems — a product of the logging industry in the region.

The annual Grassy Narrows Youth Gathering is scheduled for August.

Currently, organizers in Grassy Narrows and solidarity activists in Southern Ontario are preparing for River Run 2014: Walk with Grassy Narrows for clean water and Indigenous rights (check out www.freegrassy.net for more info) July 29th -31st in Toronto.

Also ongoing in local Anishinabe Territory is the NamekosepiiwAnishinaape People's fight to save Big Falls on the Trout River, which is at the headwaters of the English River system. Please sign the petition available at: www.change.org/en-CA/petitions/let-s-save-big-falls-petition

RIGHT Illustration by Mia



Institutions and/as Prisons: Mass Incarceration, Disability & White Supremacy

How can conversations about prison abolition expand to include disabled people's experiences? by AJ Withers

THIS IS A TRANSCRIPT OF THE SPEECH THAT A.J. Withers gave at the 15th International Conference on Penal Abolition in Ottawa recently. To listen to the audio or view the transcript for the full speech visit www.stillmyrevolution.org

Hi. Thanks, everyone, for coming. I want to start by giving you a tiny bit of context about me. I am a disabled, queer, trans, poor but upwardly mobile, white person. I have been doing organizing work for about fifteen years and only been peripherally involved in prisoner justice or prison abolition work – as a legal worker and doing anti-poverty work – which I think is actually a really key part of prison abolition work but often times it doesn't get viewed or framed that way. Frankly, though, the largest role that I have played in what gets called prison abolition work generally is me being asked to be the token speaker around disability issues – which is not what I am saying is happening here right now, but that's usually what my role has been in the movement. But, early on as an activist, I was arrested and spent eight days in prison, and all of it

was in administrative segregation because I was disabled. My time in jail is a very short amount of time and I certainly don't want to compare it to as being a similar experience to many of the people who have spoken here already. That time, however, was really informative for me. It really informed my experience of – my understanding of – disability: - being segregated, my lack of access to my medication, and my lack of access to my cane and wrist braces had a really major impact on me and my experience of time and how much longer and worse that experience was than other people I knew that spent the same amount of time at the same place. In prison organizing, however, I didn't really see any kind of discussion about what being disabled in prison means or any sort of... any discussion about disabled people generally at all. I think that, however, the ways that I've worked to bring disability into prison justice abolition works at times, and there's certainly many other people that have done so, [but it's] been a reflection of the mainstream disability organizing, which has actually worked [out] to be racist. And so at the same time, where I think it's important to

bring these arguments forward, I'm also kind of critiquing myself and the way that a number of people have tried to do that within abolition movements. And so, in this presentation, I want to speak from my perspective and try and make this intervention, and think about ways that we can move forward.

For a very long time, the mainstream disability rights movement has been active in fighting incarceration – as Liat very eloquently spoke about. And one of the distinctions that has been made by, I think, both the abolition movement and the mainstream disability rights movement is this distinction between people who are incarcerated because of, fundamentally, who they are verses something that they did. Disability rights organizers have consistently tried to distinguish people being in psych(iatric) prisons, [from those] in nursing homes [and] in residential institutions for people with intellectual disabilities; the first being fundamentally unjust because those people are there because of who they are – that's the injustice. And it's okay that prisons exist because people did something to get there, they're bad people so we can justify only working in this one area. But, as I think people here know, that's a bit of a flawed thesis, and two examples of how that's untrue are the disproportionate rates of people of colour in the prison system and racist sentencing practices. So, there's certain people that are criminalized, there's certain people that are surveilled, there's certain groups that come into the eyes of the criminal justice system and then those groups are much more likely to go to prison and then stay in prison. So this kind of line – that there's a difference between being in jail because of something you did verses because of who you are – is just a really false one and it's a way that I think the disability rights movement has worked to maintain white supremacy.

Since the implementation of neoliberal practices that eliminated or dramatically reduced many social programs, and the shift toward imprisonment of many disabled people – particularly those who are psychiatrized and labelled as intellectually disabled, – we have seen what amounts to a pattern of re-institutionalization – with all of Liat's very thoughtful and more thought-through comments in that – so just take those two statements together. A number of disability scholars and rights movement activists have now been turning their gaze onto prisons and saying that this is a form re-institutionalization, and its unjust because so many [people with] disabilities are being in imprisoned in these institutions, which once didn't imprison as many folks and again, though, really trying to

Disablism on the inside means that disabled people, particularly psychiatrized people, are more likely to be put in maximum security, less likely to be provided programming and have greater barriers to accessing parole – meaning that they spend longer time inside.

distinguish between who ends up there because of disability or through disability, and the people who end up there because they're really just 'bad people' and they should be there.

Just to give you an example of some of the rates of disability in prison: there are estimates that twenty five percent of folks in the federal prison system are considered to have psychiatric disabilities. HIV/AIDS rates are ten times higher in prisons than in the general population, with almost percent of women and two percent of men being HIV positive. And twenty to thirty percent of criminalized people are intellectually disabled.

According to Jean Stewart and Marta Russell, in the United States, "at any given moment, forty percent of all Americans with serious mental illness are estimated to be in jail or prison, comprising from ten to thirty percent of all inmates." So, of the people, – again, with Liat's problematizing of the word 'profound' or 'serious' – but of those people that are classified as having 'serious' mental health issues in the United States, forty percent of those people are in the prison system right now. And, the numbers of physically disabled people are really quite difficult to find and track, but are quite high. So, I would argue [disabled folks are] disproportionately represented in prisons and prisons are also a source of disablement for many prisoners – so, as more and more people are going to prison and are there longer, more and more people are becoming disabled in the prison system. But, somehow the disability rights movement can still distinguish itself from those people. So, in both Canada and the United States, the number of disabled people is both disproportionately and, I would argue, alarmingly and astronomically high.

There are a number of inter-locked processes that have resulted in high rates of imprisonment and [they] can be lumped into three general causes: disablism on the outside, disablism in the court system and disablism on the inside. Disablism on the outside means that disabled people are much more likely to live in poverty and to be viewed as dangerous (so even though psychiatrized people are most frequently constructed as dangerous, – they

are more likely to be the victims of violence than the perpetrators of it – we still have this view that they're dangerous, they're unpredictable and they need to be separated from us). So, disablism on the outside. And, then within the court system it is very difficult for disabled people, in part because of poverty – but [also] for lots of other reasons to get proper legal representation, a fair trial and/or a fair sentence. Disablism on the inside means that disabled people, particularly psychiatrized people, are more likely to be put in maximum security, less likely to be provided programming and have greater barriers to accessing parole – meaning that they spend longer time inside. And I'll go into some of those barriers in a bit. These are really important things to draw attention to. Prisoners' justice and abolition organizing has oftentimes ignored these issues and/or simply just paid lip-service to them. This is insufficient. However, the way that they have largely been taken up within disability organizing (and, to be clear, it is a bit of a marginal in disability organizing in terms of the prison system but in terms of institutions, it's central), this usually [doesn't] involve a share of races. So, the reality has been that there has been a prisoner's justice movement that has often and importantly attended to the disproportionate and utterly unacceptable and unjust rates of people of colour in the prison industrial complex but doesn't attend to disability issues. While, at the same time, we have a disability rights movement that is increasingly drawing attention to disabled people in prisons while entirely or nearly entirely erasing race – as if one is either disabled and white or a person of colour. And, I have been complicit in this in the past in prison talks by noting the rates of disproportionately people of colour in prisons and then going on to discuss what it's like to be disabled in prison. And, that, I think, is a real harm and is particularly an erasure of huge numbers of disabled people of colour and those experiences are really informative and essential and need to be centered in conversations about disability and incarceration – and yet they are largely erased. And, one of the things that I'm excited about: didn't write for the book *Disability Incarcerated* but I am excited that it's coming out because I think it is indicating a bit of a shift in that kind of way of thinking about disability and incarceration.

Just in terms of these two groups not being separate and being deeply interlocked: people of colour are disproportionately more likely to be disabled. Race bias in diagnoses mean that racialized people are more likely to be diagnosed with schizophrenia and psychotic affective disorder – so the most serious, and most violent, and most permanent psychiatric disorders, as opposed to white people. [It is] more likely, a black person will get

Prison doctors can overrule anything a doctor on the outside says, so that can have really major implications for people's medical care.

a diagnosis of schizophrenia and a white person will get a diagnosis of bipolar. As well, war, poverty, prison and environmental racism all lead to the disproportionate disablement of people of colour, and war and poverty are the primary causes of disability in the world; communities of colour, particularly in the Global South, bear the brunt of those two systems. So, this erasure meant that it was entirely logical that a prisoners' justice organization told a disability justice organization that I was a part of that it couldn't engage with us about broad and specific concerns about disablism in their organization because it was too busy dealing with issues of racism in its organization. If disabled people are constructed as white, it makes sense that the issue of disablism is unrelated to the issue of racism – but this isn't the case. So I have no doubt that dealing with internal issues of racism in the organization was urgent and essential and I by no means want to devalue that. I was concerned then, as I am now, however, that disability and race were seen as separate and that racism was seen as urgent while disablism wasn't. And [while] it could be seen as being able to deal with one and then the other, the actuality is that you can't deal with either of those things without dealing with them together, and we can't actually deal with those things without also dealing with class and with gender and sexuality, and all of the other kinds of marginalized identities that are all interlocked together. So, it's crucial that we view oppressions and identities as interlocked. Attempting to talk about disability without race is racist and it works to erase real disabled people. The same can be said in the inverse. The failure to recognize this has been a major shortcoming of both movements and has really meant that the needs of prisoners haven't been addressed.

So, here are a few of the ways that disabled people, many if not most of whom are also racialized, are impacted in the prison system:

One way is through a lot of disabled people [being] put into medical units or into administrative segregation and this can mean, among other things: no television, restricted phone access, no programming, no interaction with other people unless they are guards or, occasionally, cell-mates, restricted yard access, restricted shower and laundry access, restricted or no library or book access. So, a lot of the things that makes prison manageable for a lot of prisoners – if you're disabled, you don't get access to those things.

It means that assistive devices and equipment will likely be taken away from people so if somebody needs a cane, wrist braces, back brace, or a sleep apnoea machine, they will not have access to it.

People can be put in a higher security stream to save money on accessibility. For example, if there

are five blind prisoners, one in max one in medium and three in minimum, they could put all five in maximum security in order to have to only deliver one program for blind prisoners. So, there are people in that scenario that have [more] restrictions and are on a higher security – which will affect their ability to be released simply because they are blind.

In fact, the federal "Custody Rating Scale" and provincial (in Ontario) "Level of Supervision Inventory" explicitly base their criteria for security streaming on disability – implying that disabled people are inherently dangerous. The lack of attendant care may mean that people can't go to the bathroom or have to wait hours, or get help from prisoners in order to do so – and the same as getting in and out of bed and just, like, basic daily things people not having access to. Lack of language interpretation services, including ASL (American Sign Language). So, particularly if there's, say, an announcement on a loudspeaker telling everyone to get down because they're going to start shooting in the yard, Deaf people aren't going to hear that announcement and there's not an interpreter around, really ever, for people when they're actually in daily life in the prison.

Prison doctors can overrule anything a doctor on the outside says, so that can have really major implications for people's medical care. Medication is distributed arbitrarily. Oftentimes, the prison nurse does rounds three times a day, and if you need your medication five times a day, you get your medication three times a day. And, in many institutions, they distribute sleeping pills at dinner time.

And, if you are disabled and you want to visit someone you love who is in prison, don't count on being accommodated, and if you use a wheelchair,

If you are disabled and you want to visit someone you love who is in prison, don't count on being accommodated, and if you use a wheelchair, there's a very good chance that you won't even actually be able to visit someone in a lot of institutions.

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The imposition of mandatory minimum sentences that the Harper government brought down is leading to an increase in prison populations over all, but that coupled with getting rid of house arrest for a number of offences means that many disabled people that would have otherwise been put on house arrest because of really serious accessibility issues, or health issues, or complex needs for care will be put into prisons and not get that care that they need. Legislation requires prisoners to fulfill the terms of their correction plans before they are released, but for disabled folks, when programming is not available and when prison is much more inaccessible, it's much more difficult to complete those programs and, therefore, people who can't get parole end up being in prison longer.

Also there are now more powers to punish inmates for "bad behaviour" inside the system – which means that people who are psychiatrized or are intellectually disabled people, in particular, could be facing these punishments daily (which isn't to say that they weren't before Harper) and that could be used to deny them parole.

So, what do we do about it? There are a lot of things that we can do and I'm just going to try to, very quickly, tell you seven of them.

ONE

Learning from history – You can be the bestest history expert in the world and there's still so much more to learn. All of our struggles exist because of specific historical events. The disproportionate numbers of Indigenous and/or racialized and/or poor and/or disabled prisoners is the direct result of settler colonialism – including but not limited to the theft of land, denial of rights, attempts of forced assimilation, kidnapping of children and overt and passive genocide of Indigenous peoples (past and present) on this land. It is the direct result of the transAtlantic slave trade, which brutalized, oppressed, repressed and killed millions of Africans on this land and which transitioned to legal slavery in prisons. The mass incarceration of Black people began with the abolishment of chattel slavery because of the perceived threat that this population posed. It is the direct result of eugenics that called for and resulted in the sterilization and/or segregation (ie. institutionalization) of disabled people, queers, poor and other marginalized people on this land. Learn these histories and how they are interlocked.

TWO

Learning from the history and, particularly, looking at movements here and around the world that have

had successes, why they have had them, what their failures have been and how do we actually integrate those lessons into our struggles – which Liat's presentation was very helpful for.

THREE

Build bridges between movements: If you aren't thinking of oppressions as interlocked – as formed in conjunction with and through one another – start thinking about it that way. This also means that we must situate [prison] abolition within broader struggles against capitalism, against colonialism and against all forms of oppression. Coming out to a disability protest, then is prison abolition work. So start looking at things broadly and situated within broader struggles and supporting those struggles.

FOUR

Direct support should always include supporting people to get the medical care that they need, and our demands need to actually reflect the lives of disabled people. So, when we're talking about the problems of segregation, we're also talking about what that means for disabled people. When we're talking about any particular part of an institution and critiquing it, making sure disabled people are present in it.

FIVE

The next one is bottom-up justice – this is from Dean Spade's book, but Liat said something that made me think of it – it's really looking at who the most oppressed people are and instead of fighting for rights of the most privileged, fighting for rights at the bottom. And that justice will trickle up but justice does not trickle down. So you win gay [marriage] rights for the gaygeoisie, it doesn't change a lot of people's lives – but if you win basic health care for sex workers on the street then that basic health care is there for all of us.

SIX

And then, building alternatives – so working towards community solutions, solving our problems in our communities, working on keeping people out of jail, targeting the system from a whole bunch of different areas. I wrote this zine about transformative justice, I'm happy to talk about it another time if people want.

SEVEN

Ultimately, we have to fight for a better world. When I say we have to fight, yes, I actually mean we have to fight. We have to fight hard, we have to fight to win, we have to fight until we win. We have no other choice, but we will win. Thank you. [△](#)

EXCERPTS FROM:

Disability Incarcerated: Imprisonment and Disability in the United States and Canada

Edited by Liat Ben-Moshe, Chris Chapman, and Allison C. Carey

CHAPMAN

“How can there be accountability today to the childhood experience of bell hooks, a young Black girl threatened with institutionalization if she talked back to an adult? How can there be accountability to 19-year-old Ashley Smith, who died in her isolation cell in Kitchener just a few years ago? How can there be accountability to “Emily no. 049” who died in the Kuper Island Residential School and wasn’t grieved by the White adults running the school because she was Indigenous, deaf, and “quasi-dumb” (Fournier and Crey 1999, 60)? How can there be accountability to “X.X.” from Lennox Island whose toes had to be cut off due to severe frostbite in the Shubenacadie Indian Residential School, after having been exposed to severe cold as a punishment for running away (Chrisjohn and Young 2006, 54)? Or to the women forcibly sterilized or permanently incarcerated so that they wouldn’t give birth to another generation of “feeble-mindedness”? Or to emancipated slaves who found themselves working in similar conditions after being arrested for petty violations of Jim Crow laws? These are just some of the hauntings that need to inform politics, policies, activism, and scholarship today—real people who lived and died confined, or with the threat of confinement shaping the possibilities for their lives. And how can we live in a way that is also accountable, as Derrida says, to those “not yet born”? How can there be accountability to children who are born tomorrow or ten years from now—especially those who, because of disability, race, or class, are born disproportionately likely to live all or part of their lives in the terrible spaces of the carceral/institutional archipelago? This future “yet to come”—that of the Ashleys and the Emilys of tomorrow—is a looming presence that has to be lived with, that has to be contended with, today” (Chapman, Carey, and Ben-Moshe, p. 18).

“I once worked in an institution where almost all the children were Indigenous. Many were children of survivors of “Indian Residential Schools,” and all had a disability diagnosis or suspected diagnosis recorded in their files... In wondering about historical developments through which places like this had emerged, I was surprised to find that North American timelines of the educationally oriented confinement of intellectually disabled people and of the Indian Residential School system mapped neatly onto one another. In the 1840s, both systems emerged, and their abolitions both began in the 1960s. What can be made of this?” (Chapman, p. 25).

DAVIS


“Disability Incarcerated is an exciting development at the intersection of the fields of critical prison studies and disability studies. The anthology not only represents important scholarly work in these fields, but it also stages conversations across numerous borders, including the one separating the United States and Canada and those that strive to divorce scholarship and activism. When I was first introduced to the ideas explored in this collection, I remembered a scene from the era of my own incarceration. ... This collection of essays asks the questions I wish I had known how to formulate then and so many more that have only become possible in the aftermath of two decades of intense research and passionate activism against the prison industrial complex and after the emergence of fields of study and radical activism around the category of disability. ... The chapters in this collection do not simply seek to identify points of convergence of race, gender, class, sexuality, and disability within the framework of historically developing modes of incarceration. Rather they also aim to transform entrenched ways of conceptualizing imprisonment. They point out that carceral practices are so deeply

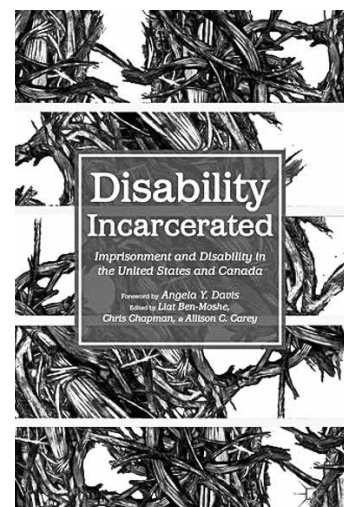
embedded in the history of disability that it is effectively impossible to understand

incarceration without attending to the confinement of disabled people”. (Angela Davis, foreword, pp. vii-viii)

BEN-MOSHE

“Those who advocate for anti-institutionalization and prison abolition see community as in need of change, and do not see integration per se as the goal, but the formation of new caring, socially just communities. This could be characterized as one of the main differences between (newer) formulations of activism around the concept of “disability justice,” as opposed to work geared toward disability rights. Disability justice represents a conceptual shift from notions of advocating for rights or equality in a system that is oppressive and unjust to begin with (such as increasing employment for people with disabilities in an unjust capitalist marketplace and discussing “community services” only through the discourse of for-profit health care system) to advocating for social change more broadly. Disability justice activists confront the ways various oppressions, such as racism, sexism, capitalism and ableism, intersect to influence the lives of disabled people in the arenas of education, self care, empowerment, housing, work, health, sexuality, and recreation.

The goal is not to replace one form of control, such as a hospital, institution, and prison, with another, such as psychopharmaceuticals, nursing homes, and group homes. The aspiration is to fundamentally change the way we respond to difference or harm, the way normalcy is defined, the ways resources are distributed and accessed, and the ways we respond to each other.” (Ben-Moshe, p. 269) 





The Prison's Failure as Functional Objective in a Class Based Society

by Jarrod G. Shook

"But the not-self cannot have the bad, meaning they of the government and the judges and the schools cannot allow the bad because they cannot allow the self. And is not our modern history, my brothers, the story of brave malenky selves fighting these big machines? (A Clockwork Orange p.34)"

WHAT IS 'THE BAD' WHICH ANTHONY BURGESS'S (1962) nadsat-argot-speaking delinquent protagonist Alex is referring to in the above excerpt from *A Clockwork Orange*? A fictional account though it is, there seems to be a deeply troubling, yet profound philosophical truth in his statement. Namely, that "the bad" is the government, the judges, the schools (read: the disciplinarians), who cannot allow 'the bad' because they cannot allow 'the self'. 'The bad' being a form of is a self, which is a threat to the established order of things.

The rest of the novel attempts to demonstrate the ethical and practical difficulties of 'turning bad into good' from without. The protagonist Alex encounters various stages of this process from the first the moral denunciation of his probation officer, followed by the institution of prison, and finally a psychological aversion treatment known as 'Ludovico's Technique' which is reminiscent of a totalitarian regime. All are failures; Alex laughs off the moral condemnation of his probation officer.

finds 'crime in the midst of punishment' in the prison; and loses all moral choice while under the brainwashing spell of 'Ludovico's Technique'. In the end, Alex comes to realise, for himself, that he simply needs to grow up and that his delinquent ways do not serve him anymore; being young, he says "is like being one of those malenky machines, it cannot help what it is doing."

The problematic nature of 'turning bad into good' found in Burgess's novel in reality is not far from contemporary society. Alex describe 'the bad' as something that the established order cannot allow; much like the fictional society found in the book, contemporary western liberal 'democracies' attempt to 'turn bad into good' (read, *punish into submission*).

Punishment is not an easily definable term. As Garland (1990) points out:

"Punishment is not susceptible to a logical or formulaic definition... it is a social institution embodying and condensing a range of purposes and a stored up depth of historical meaning" (p. 17).

Although Garland further states that punishment "also takes place outside the legal system—in schools, families, workplaces, military, etc.," (Garland 1990 p. 17), I will be referring to punishment hereafter as "the legal process whereby violations of the criminal law are condemned and

sanctioned in accordance with specified legal categories and procedures” (Garland 1990 p.17). The focus here being to describe under what circumstances, if ever, a punishment can teach something. That is, do we really ‘turn bad into good’? And more specifically can we really ‘turn bad into good’?



The thesis of *A Clockwork Orange* is essentially that ‘the bad’ is a choice. In the dialectic of free-will versus determinism that the author promotes in the novel, a deep suspicion of the state machinery is revealed with regard to its role in performing the function of punishment. While I do not endorse his thesis that ‘the bad’ is merely a choice, I certainly identify with his reservations concerning the state and its tendency towards adopting a distinctive position on punishment. Marx (1848) posits this tendency as a class characteristic by stating that, the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie” (Marx, p.475).

By identifying the institution of punishment as a critical aspect of a class-based society, I will argue that not only do we not ‘turn bad into good’, but that, given the current political order, we cannot ‘turn bad into good’, because “bad” is too useful to Bourgeois hegemony under capitalism. In defence of this thesis, I will draw heavily on the work of Michel Foucault who, in his tour de force *Discipline and Punish* (1977) promotes the failure of the prison as its functional objective.

Foucault’s genealogical study of punitive mechanisms obeys four general rules, the most relevant to this discussion being “to regard punishment as a political tactic” (Foucault, 1977 p.23). In this way, “we must rid ourselves of the illusion that penalty is above all [if not exclusively] a means of reducing crime...(Foucault 1977 p.24)”.

Foucault adheres to this code as he exhaustively documents for us the transition that took place in prisons from punishments that struck the body (as in torture) to those which struck the soul. He explains this in terms of a to punish deeper into the social body (p. 82)

On this point let us look at the undeniable failure of the prison. Foucault posits that prisons fabricate delinquents,(p.255) and that in reality, their visible effects constitute the great failure of penal justice. (p. 264). Foucault further observes that “prisons do not diminish the crime rate” that

it is detention which causes recidivism. (p.265). Moreover, the judicial system which offers prisons as a remedy for social delinquency, is the same institution which sets the parameters of social deviancy. (pg 267-268) Which begs the question: “is not the supposed failure part of the functioning of the prison?” (p.268)

Foucault suggests four specific “failures” of the prison which actually happen to carry out quite precise political functions, these being: (a) the maintenance of delinquency, (b) the encouragement of recidivism, (c) that occasional offenders become habitual delinquents, and (d) that a closed milieu of delinquency is created (p. 272). This fundamental reality of the prison as a peculiarly failed institution seems to support the idea that we do not really turn bad into good—as the prison, if anything, seems to exacerbate the problem it purports to be responding to. Let us now tease out these points a little further by examining them in their manifest forms.

To the first point, that the prison maintains delinquency, Foucault’s primary references document mid-19th century carceral conditions. Little has changed with regard to the prison’s tendency to maintain the delinquency it claims to eliminate. An example of this can be found in the “convict culture” that exists in almost every prison. This “convict culture” has been argued to be both imported from the criminal milieu of the street and also a response to the depravity and deprivation of the prison itself. Prisoners are thus socially obligated to adhere to a strict code, among which includes prison rules and roles such as “never rat”, “don’t show weakness”, and “stay solid” while maintaining a strong, macho, and recalcitrant persona. Of course, these rules and roles are enforced by the threat of violence and social ostracism if not adhered to. Group conformity experiments such as those conducted by scholars like Solomon Asch under even less coercive conditions reveal the powerful influence that group pressure to conform can have on an individual (as cited by Henslin, J.; Glenday, D.; Duffy, R.; and Pupo, N. 2004). As such, the tendency to adopt the persona and attitude of the majority is typical. When this is coupled this with the omnipresent influence of prisonization, whereby sophisticated prisoners who come from diverse criminal backgrounds interact with one another, prisoners end up teaching each other the skills and attitudes of a deviant career. As Sykes (1958) concludes in his classic sociological account of the prison “whatever the influence of imprisonment on the man held captive may be, it will be a product of the patterns of social interaction which the prisoner enters into day after day, year after year...(p.134)”.

All of the above, of course, simply feed into the prison’s institutional encouragement of

recidivism upon release. As Foucault remarks “[the prison] brings back almost inevitably before the courts those who have been sent there” (p. 255). After all, “convicts are, in very high proportion, former inmates” (p. 265). Once again, we needn’t restrict ourselves to the mid-19th century example to confirm this. If anything, recidivism rates are in all probability much higher now than they were then. The prison returns to the community a person who has been rejected for breaking the “social pact”. This society will be just as intolerant of their return to the community. What is more, their family bonds have been broken and the “bad” person has been “thrown into destitution” (p. 268); on top of that, add the ever-difficult prospect of finding employment while facing the stigma of a criminal conviction. Thus, the tendency to return to criminal activity is overly determined before the prisoner has even walked out the door is what makes their recidivism a certainty, however, is not necessarily or solely the likelihood that they will commit a criminal act, but rather the fact that they are more likely to be caught. The net has been widened, “they are under surveillance by the police, they are assigned to a particular residence, and they are forbidden others” (Foucault 1977 p.267).

Under the modern parole system in North America an imperceptible force is also at work in determining recidivism. Almost all parolees are given particular stipulations, meant to “manage their risk” which operate as a form of semi-detention on the street, ranging from non-association orders to prohibitions on drug and alcohol use. When one of these conditions is broken, it creates a sort of pseudo-state of war, as the individual in question realizes that they will certainly be sent back to prison for breaching conditions. In many cases this psychology forces them underground (a crime in and of itself) into a survival mode which invariably places them in a situation where they are more willing to commit crime for survival in an attempt to escape the detection of the authorities, which paradoxically almost guarantees that they will be sent back to prison once they are caught for even more time than they originally began with. In this sense, the one time delinquent now becomes a habitual offender by nature of the circumstances that are guaranteed to those who should find themselves in such an unlucky position to have broken the law in the first place. Let us not forget who these people are, for after all, the crimes we actually punish are almost exclusively committed by “members of a certain social class” (Foucault 1977 p.275).

Of course, like most people who share a common plight, socio-economic backgrounds, economic interests or aspirations, criminalised people are very likely to associate with one another. In the

criminalised underground the easiest person to trust is someone who ‘has some skeletons of their own in the closet’. Thus a closed milieu of delinquency is created (an association of sorts).

What we have here, then, is what Foucault describes as a ‘general economy’ of illegality (Foucault 1977 p.272), it appears as though the prison has succeeded in “producing delinquency, a specific type, a politically or economically less dangerous, and an occasionally usable form of illegality (Foucault 1977 p.272)”; But what makes the illegalities of this populous “economically and politically less dangerous?” (Foucault 1977 p.277)

Analogous to a Marxist study of punishment’s role in a “Class based process of social and economic regulation”, the Foucauldian approach goes a step further in making known what would otherwise be unknown and unnamed hidden strategies of domination and subjection (Garland 1990 p.13). These have also been regarded as ‘depth explanations’ (Garland 1990 p. 149). Garland provides sound secondary analysis of this process when he summarises the Foucauldian argument, stating:

“...the creation of delinquency is useful in a strategy of political domination because it works to separate crime from politics, to divide the working class against themselves, to enhance the fear of the prison, and to guarantee the power and authority of the police (Garland 1990 p.149).”

In respect to the argument one must keep in mind that Foucault’s answer here should be interpreted against the background of French politics in the mid 19th century. Nonetheless this theory can be extrapolated in the modern context as we still remain to be ruled “in a system of domination that depends on respect for law and for property”, thus it is equally essential to our government and their incestuous partners in the corporate world that “illegality and law breaking attitudes do not become widespread or popular”, but, above all, “that they do not become linked with political objectives” (Garland 1990 p. 149). Garland’s analysis, qua Foucault, is that under such conditions the existence of a delinquent class, unintended initially or not, may be opportunistically seized upon for the nefarious purposes of the state and its friends (Garland 1990 p.149). With the creation of a delinquent class, the “prison ensures that habitual criminals will be identified”, making them easier to “manage and keep under surveillance” (Garland 1990 p.149). This can be used to wage war on all sorts of other illegalities, and all under the banner of Public Safety. This would fall into the category of

“wider political purposes” (Garland 1990 p.150). In an almost perfect Hegelian Dialectic strategy, the fact that delinquency most often strikes out against the less protected working class means they are usually the first “to call upon the law as a protection and become suspicious of law breakers”, which only serves to play further into the ruling classes “divide and conquer strategy” (Garland 1990 p.150). What is more, the stigma attached to imprisonment gives the populace an additional discouragement from taking any legal risks and to “distrust” people who do (Garland 1990 p.150). In sum, the prison does not “control the criminal”, but rather controls the working class by creating the criminal (Garland 1990 p. 150). As Foucault so cogently remarked, “there is not, therefore, a criminal nature, but a play of forces which according to the class which individuals belong, will lead them to power or prison (Foucault 1977 p.289)”, and, might I add, that if they are led to prison their plight will be exploited to the benefit of the ruling class.

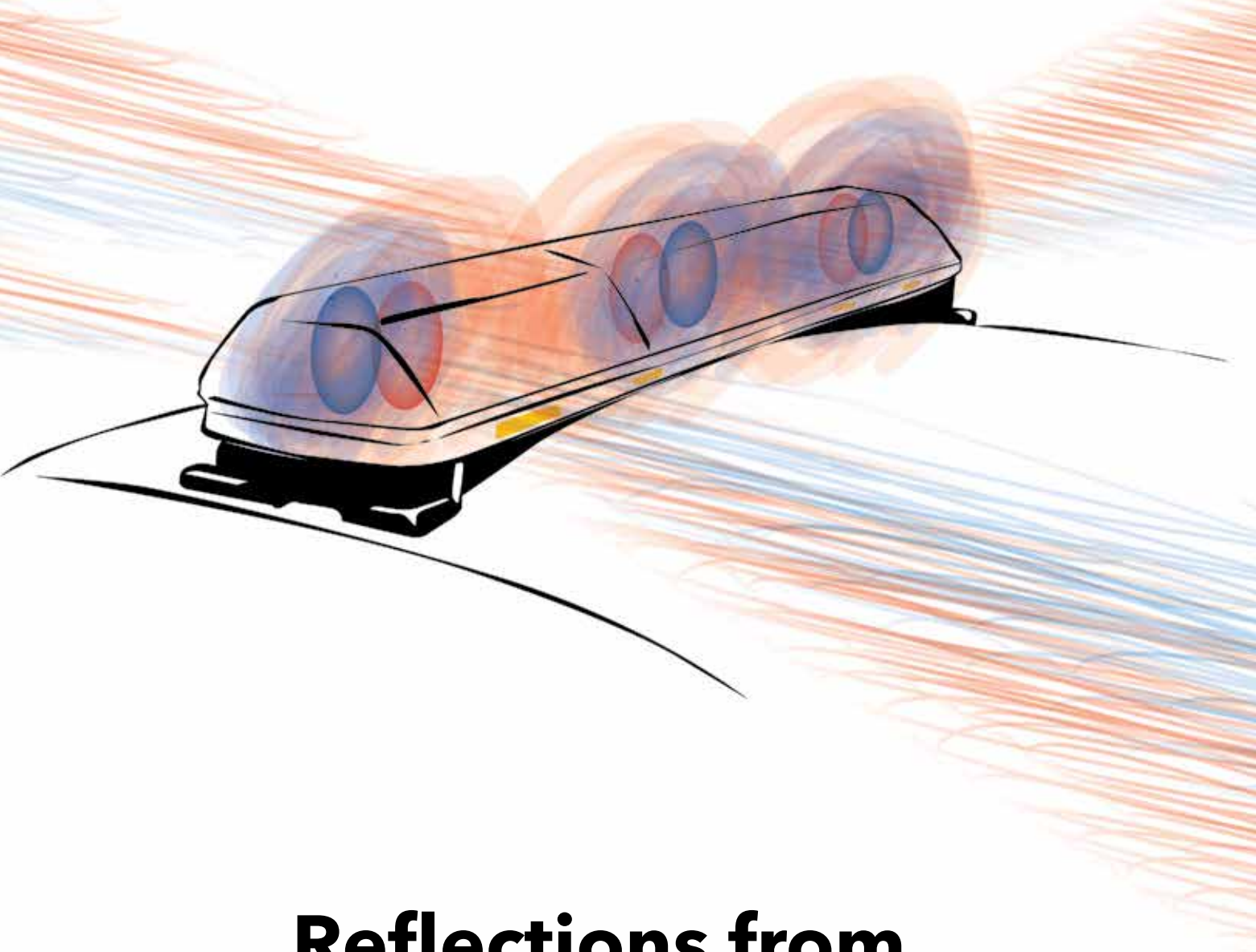
We have, then, the apparently absurd reality of the modern punishment: a peculiar social institution. Not only do we not ‘turn bad into good’ but we cannot ‘turn bad into good’, not necessarily because we cannot, but rather because the ruling class do not want to: the bad is too useful. In arriving at this conclusion, however, we must heed Foucault’s qualification that “this does not mean it cannot be altered.. (Foucault 1977 p.305)”. And while Foucault does not express entirely to us what must be done in this respect, it is not because he doesn’t believe there is nothing to be done. On the contrary, he actually suggests that the solutions are many, yet it must be done “on the part of those who, recognizing the relations of power in which they are implicated have decided to resist or escape” through their “actions of resistance and rebellion” in order to “not be subjugated any longer” (Foucault, 1991 p.173). Foucault here seems to be taking one step further Marx’s (1845) thesis XI in *Theses on Feuerbach* that “The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to change it” (p. 145). Those who must change it are, evidently, for Foucault, those who are implicated by it. As such, I feel compelled to conclude this paper with at least some attempt at agitating for change.

In summarising the fundamentals of a Marxist approach to the study of punishment Garland (1990) concludes that society is “deeply fractured by objective class divisions and these divisions constitute the fault lines and contradictions across which social conflict will be fought out, particularly where the subordinate classes become conscious of their exploitation and organize to resist or overthrow it” (p.86). Much as Marx comprehended that “the concentration of capital was accompanied

by the concentration of the workforce in larger and larger factories—under conditions where their class consciousness and mutual organization would be facilitated” (Schellenberg, 1982 p.62), the concentration of criminality is accompanied by the concentration of the criminalized in larger and larger prisons where their class consciousness and mutual organization can also be facilitated. Moreover, just as a small section of the ruling class “cuts itself adrift and joins the revolutionary class (p.481)” in the periodic crises of capitalism, so to do they sometimes find themselves amongst the ranks of the underclass in the prison. In addition to enlisting the support and resources of these people they should be recruited to assist in the political and general education of prisoners especially if they “comprehend theoretically the historical movement as a whole” (482). After all “is not our modern history, my brothers, the story of brave malenky selves fighting these big machines? (Burgess 1962 p.34)”. [△](#)

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Reflections from 'The Outside'

ILLUSTRATION Bryan Hill

Families and loved ones of criminalized individuals are targeted through law enforcement and the judicial system

by Natasha Brien

HOW MANY OF US HAVE TURNED ON THE NEWS, OR purchased a newspaper only to see headlines of “Mr. X/Ms. X gets ten years in prison for manslaughter”. What travels through our minds when we see these headlines? Perhaps it may be the circumstances of the crime, or systemic racism evident in the choice in the photo displayed or the full description provided. Some may even entertain thoughts that s/he should be ‘locked up and have the key thrown away’. While there are a plethora of responses such news can ignite, one of the forgotten elements to intersections of law and

criminality, is the loved ones of the person facing criminal charges, and/or being given a jail/prison sentence.

I speak not from a judgmental standpoint, but as a person who did not give a second thought to the ripple effects of incarceration, until I became a loved one of someone sentenced to serve a term within a Canadian federal prison. The years of house arrest we endured was a very invasive and stigmatizing experience. Having police in front of my place, who often times failed to take the time to come to the door to ‘check up’ on my loved one,


instead honking wildly outside of our residence until they received a wave to indicate the presence of the person. While I understand the police have to do their jobs, the fact that they often choose not to use a discreet method of doing so can only lead to deductive reasoning that indicates: a) they were too lazy to walk to the door, or b) it was an intentional act to draw attention to the fact that someone within the residence was actively involved with the police.

Is outing someone's status of being criminalized or of being associated with a criminalized person without his or her consent a mean thing to do? Perhaps it can be deemed an act of reckless disregard. While forced disclosure can be viewed as either of these, I argue it is also an act of violence. Whether done by the police, the media, or a friend or family member who betrayed one's confidence, circulating such personal information privately to one or two other people, or publicly to a crowd can drastically change the life of a loved one in ways s/he/they may not have been prepared for.

In what ways are these lives changed, you may ask? As someone who has been personally impacted in this way, as the founder of a peer support group for friends/families of people in conflict with the law (SOSOLO), and as a PhD student studying these issues, I have heard countless narratives in which personal experiences were shared without prior approval. This has led to eviction from homes, loss of employment, and loss of community, via the need to physically relocate. Relocation is often necessary because of anything ranging from high levels of discrimination to acts of lateral violence from people with whom a community may have once been shared.

One of my life's purposes since enduring second-hand criminalization for over half a decade is to create awareness of the ways being in conflict with the law impacts friends, families and communities of people. Despite the fact that living within a neoliberal, settler society places high regard upon individualism, and contrary to wanting to stroke our egos at times, there is nothing in this life we do alone. We are social beings, for example, even if I wanted to lock myself in a room and be physically 'on my own' while chatting online, I need someone to hook up an internet connection, someone who constructs the computer, someone who builds the pieces needed to construct that computer, and someone (or a program someone has created) to engage with an entity on the other end of the computer.

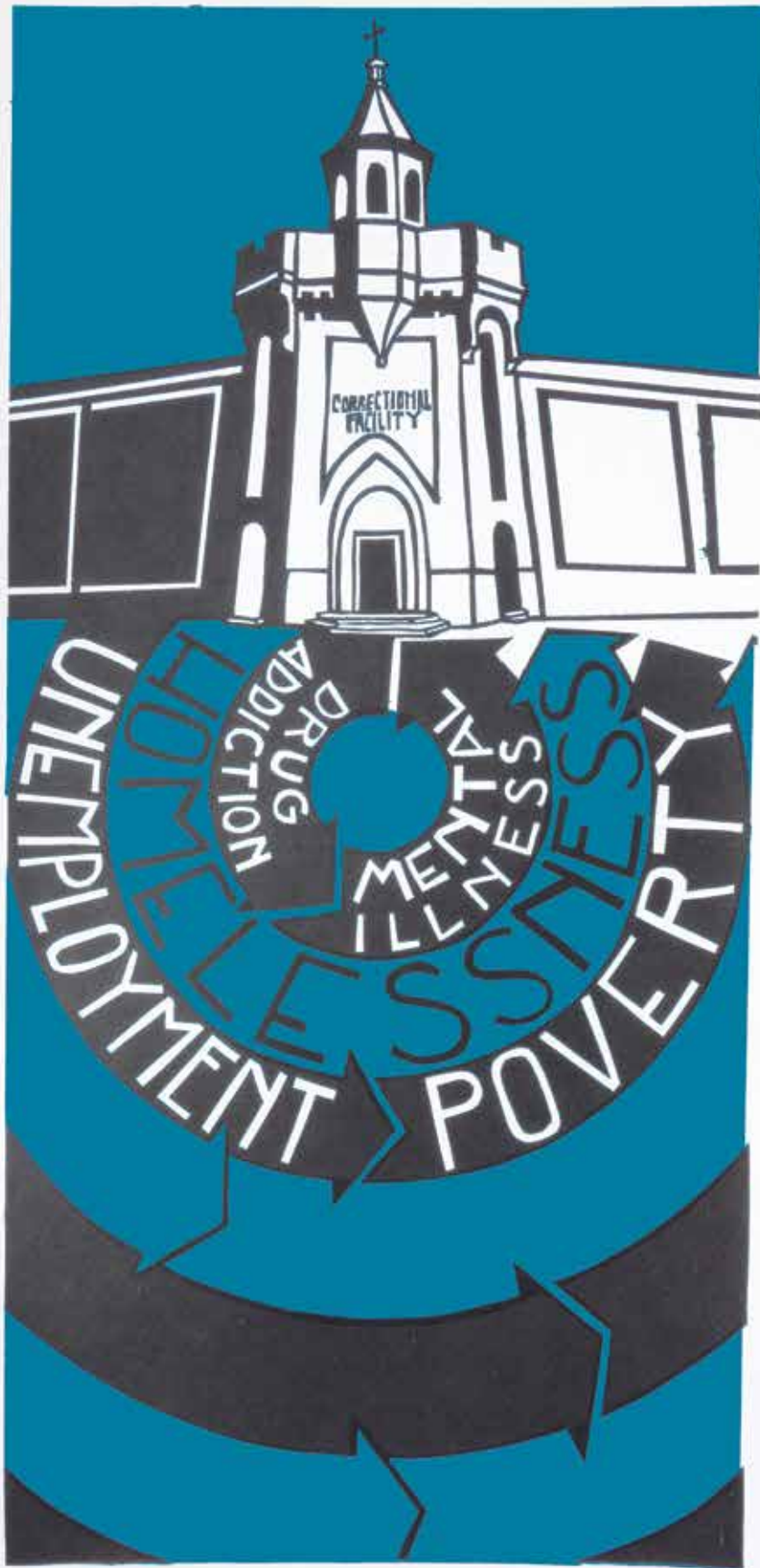
As a collective we need to start approaching social issues in a holistic way that takes into consideration all pieces of the puzzle. The next time you are considering prison-related issues, to continue

to keep that individual or group which is the direct subject of criminalization in mind, but not at the exclusion of the circle of friends, families and/or communities whose lives are equally impacted. These lives are forever changed by factors such as, but not limited to: suffering the devastation of losing someone to jail/prison; forfeiting economic support that can further impact the racialization and/or feminization of poverty; becoming the subject of high levels of surveillance from the police in a house arrest situation, or by correctional staff when visiting a prison; having to live a 'double life' as a prisoner's family member who often feels compelled to fabricate stories accounting for the whereabouts of an incarcerated daughter, father etc. due to social stigma, and a general lack of support services to cope with these life altering circumstances. I acknowledge that there are a multitude of experiences from the perspective of people who are attached in some way or another to a criminalized person, which this article does not and cannot speak to, as I am only one person. Whether the loved one of the person in conflict with the law experiences a sense of pride in support of a political stance that led to the incarceration, whether the loved one feels shame because of the nature of the crime committed, or anything in between, there are real outcomes to wearing such an identity. As such, my purpose in writing this article is to ask that you, the reader, critically reflect in potentially new ways when hearing or speaking about crime and criminalized persons in ways that are inclusive of viewing that person not only as an individual, but as someone interconnected within a web of social relationships. Only then can we extend ourselves to inquiring not only how a crime or legal conflict impacts the accused/convicted, but also those around her/him. 

Note:

I always appreciate feedback on the issues I write about, please do not hesitate to contact me with your thoughts on the article. As well, if you are a friend/family member of someone who is in conflict with the law and would like to connect with other loved ones, you can contact me at sosolo411@gmail.com. Should anyone want more information on the work that Supporting Ourselves while Supporting Our Loved Ones (SOSOLO) does, please visit our website at www.sosolo.org.

-Natasha



LEFT End The Cycle
by Kevin Caplicki

The brand new Toronto South Detention Centre has replaced visits with video conference calls.

That means that all visitors are forced to see their loved ones through computer screens.

From touch visits to digital images,

the architects behind modern prisons continue to make prison isolating for those inside and outside.



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